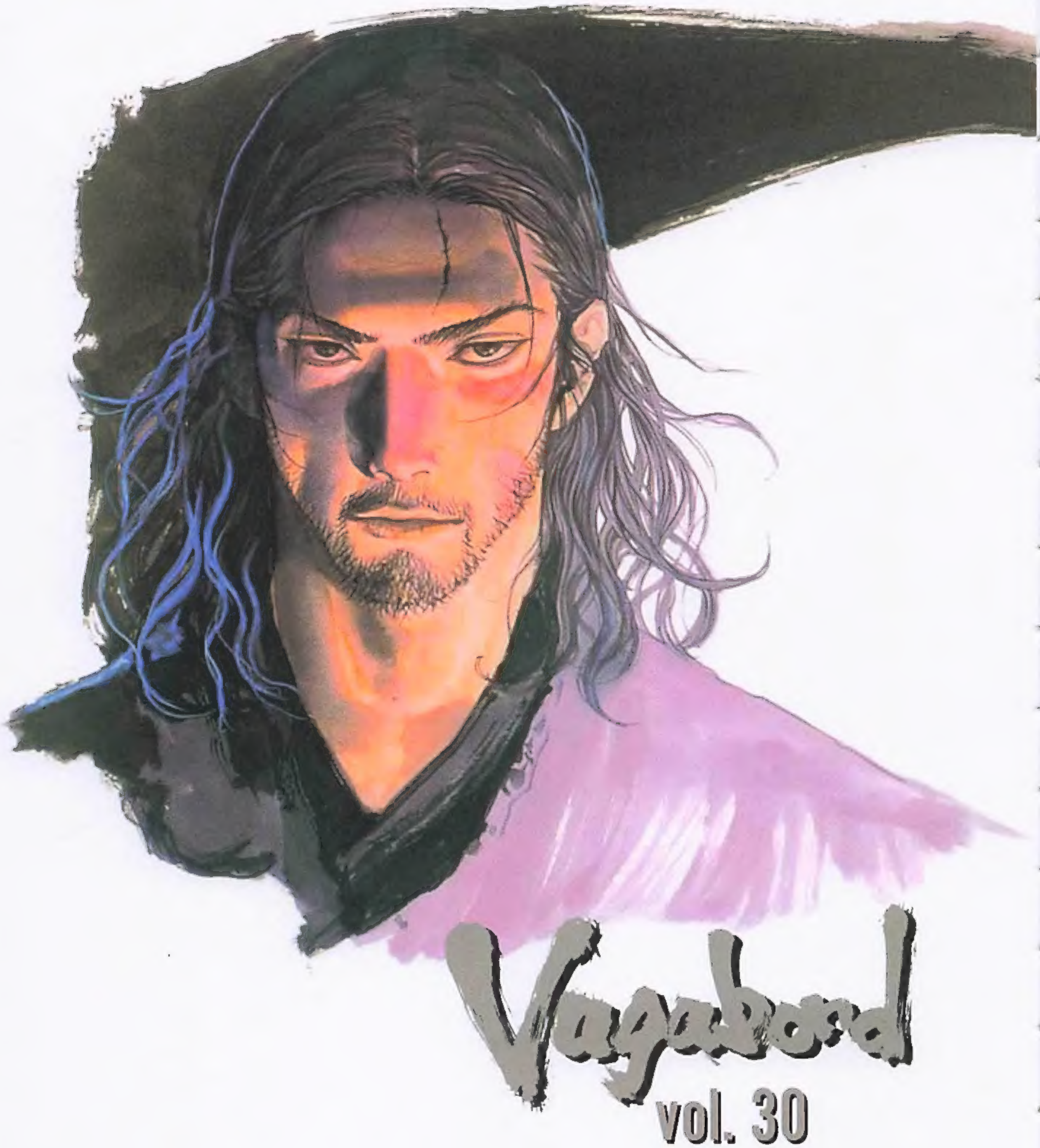

Vagabond
vol. 30

IS THE MOON OUT?
THE MOON ?
IF ONLY I COULD SEE THE MOON...

# #261 | Moonlight

...

...IT WAS THE LIGHT OF THE MOON THAT PROVIDED ME WITH SOLACE.
...DURING THE NIGHTS OF MY SOLITARY JOURNEY...
IT'S JUST THAT...

I HAVE A ROOF ABOVE ME... AND I EVEN HAVE A BED. I KNOW I HAVE IT GOOD.

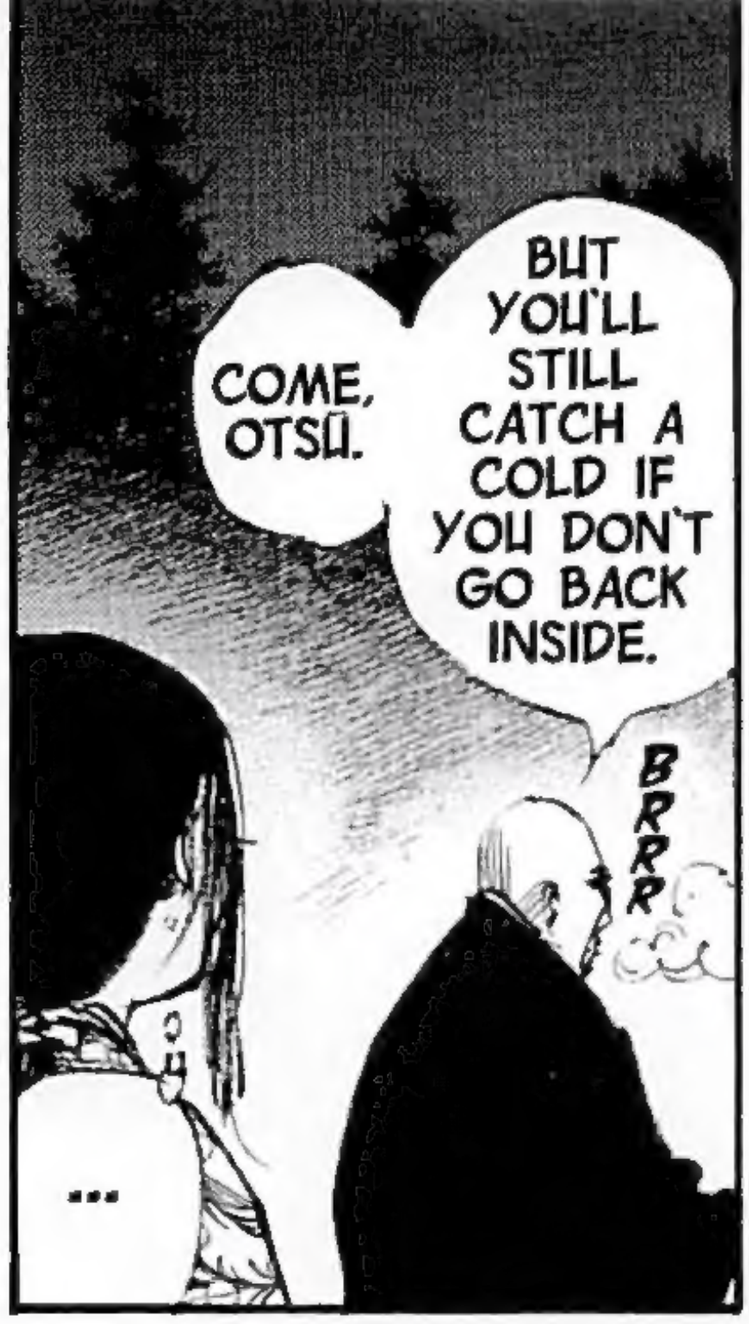
...

...

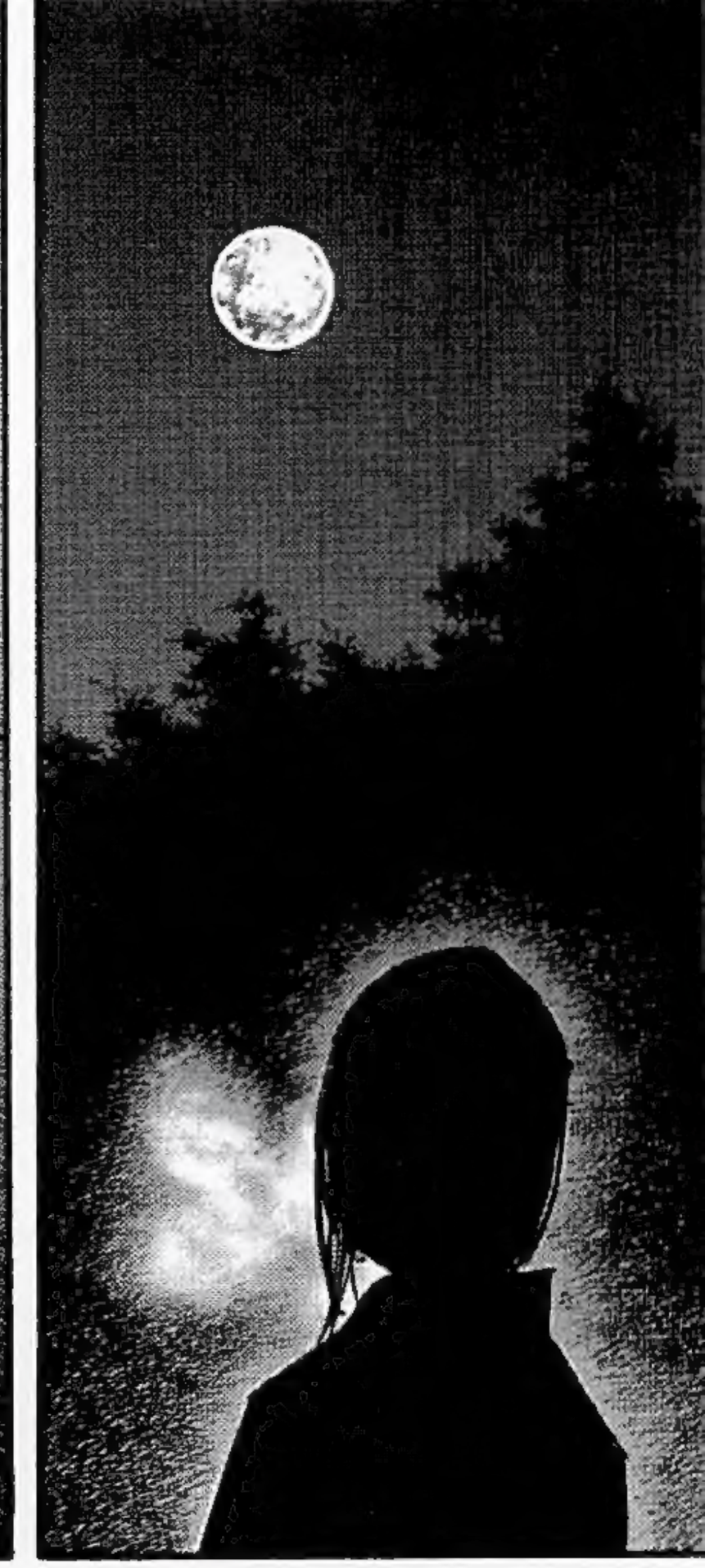
...
...BUT THIS IS ALL I CAN OFFER.
I REALIZE THIS IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR THE MOON...

FLKR

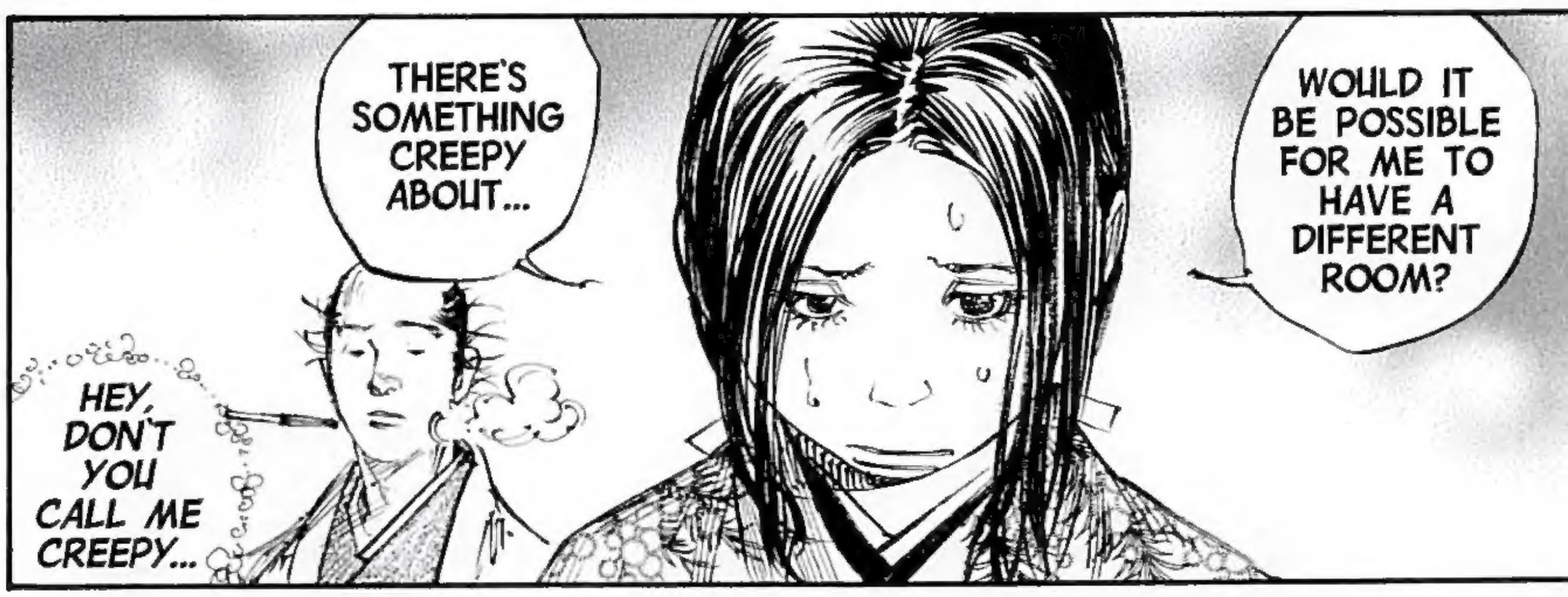
THANK YOU...


COME, OTSU.
BUT YOU'LL STILL CATCH A COLD IF YOU DON'T GO BACK INSIDE.
BRRRR
...

THE MOON IS SO MYSTERIOUS.
IT CALMS AND SOOTHES EVEN IN THE COLDNESS OF THIS NIGHT.

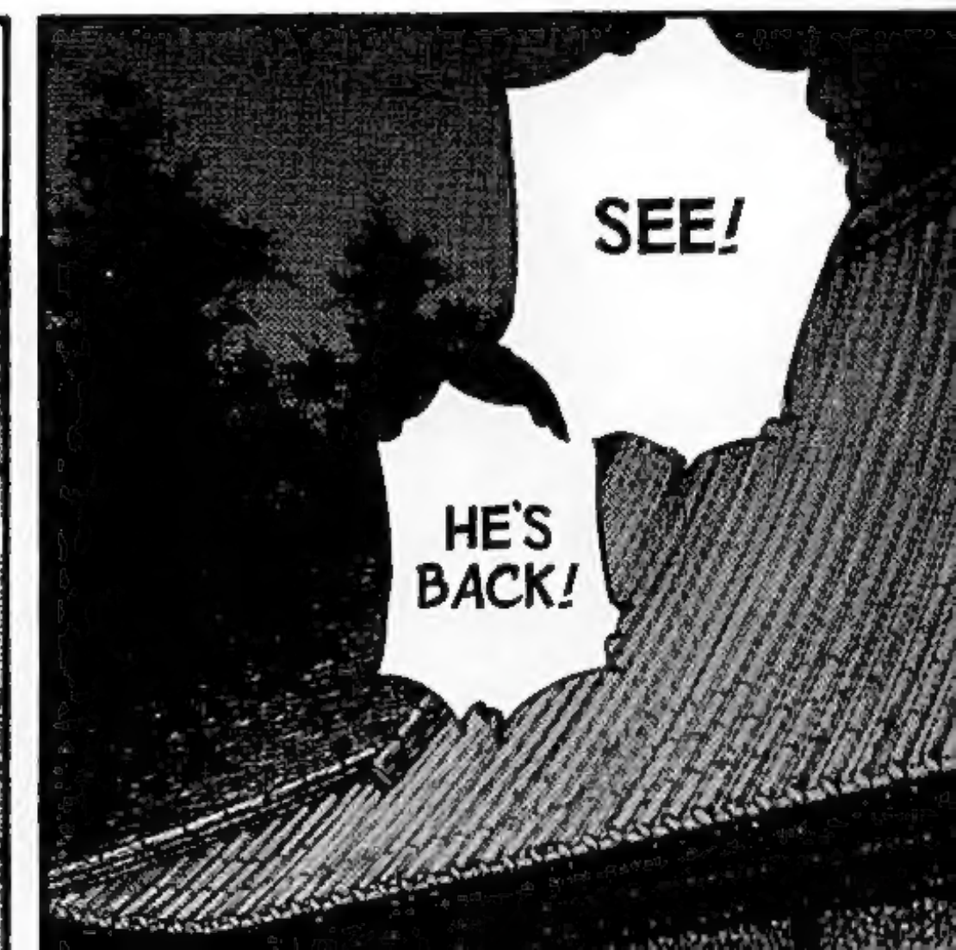


UMM...


THERE'S SOMETHING CREEPY ABOUT...
WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE FOR ME TO HAVE A DIFFERENT ROOM?
HEY, DON'T YOU CALL ME CREEPY...

LOOKS LIKE YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN SEE ME...
...OTSU.
HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?

?


SEE!
HE'S BACK!

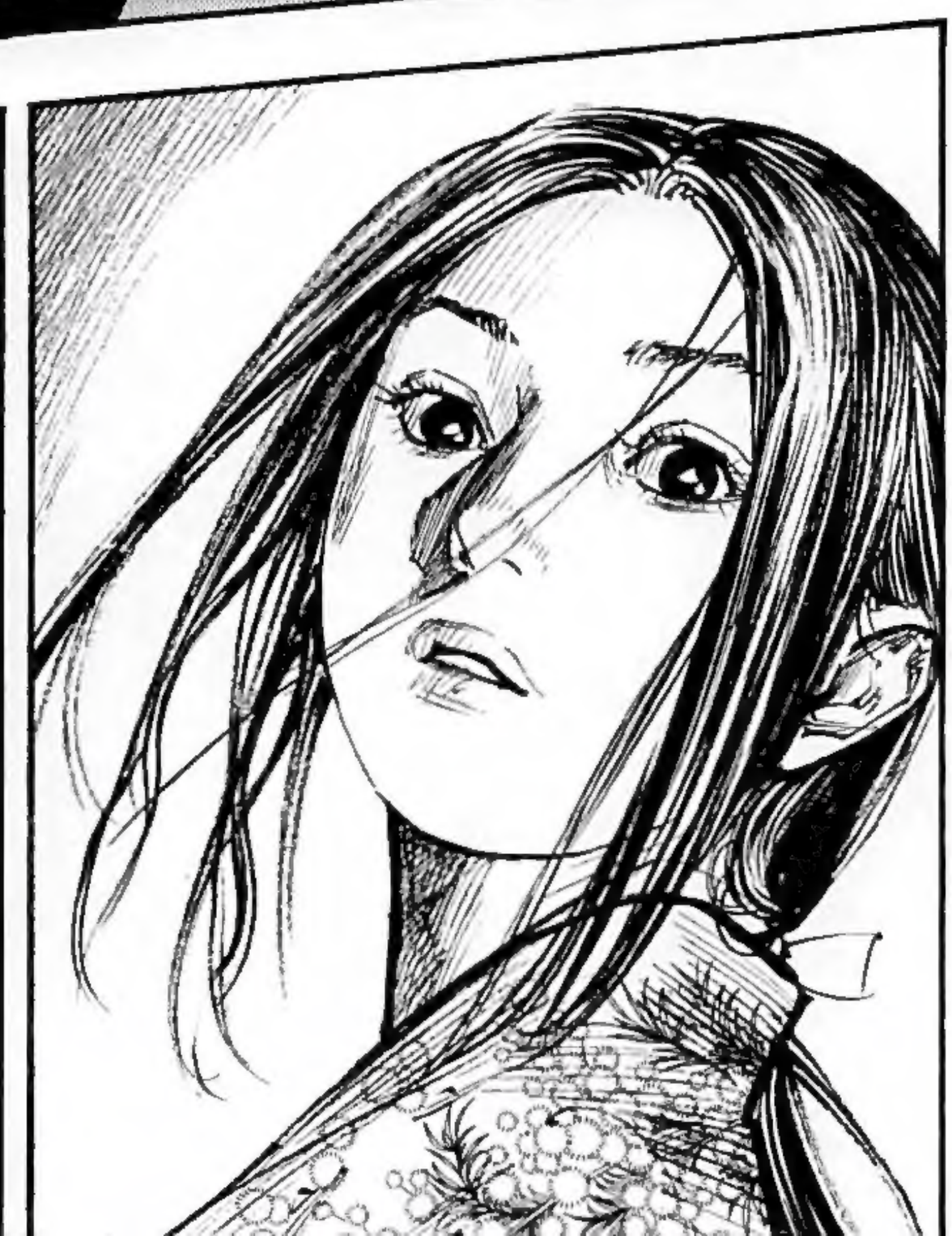
WHY AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO CAN SEE YOU?!
FWISH
?

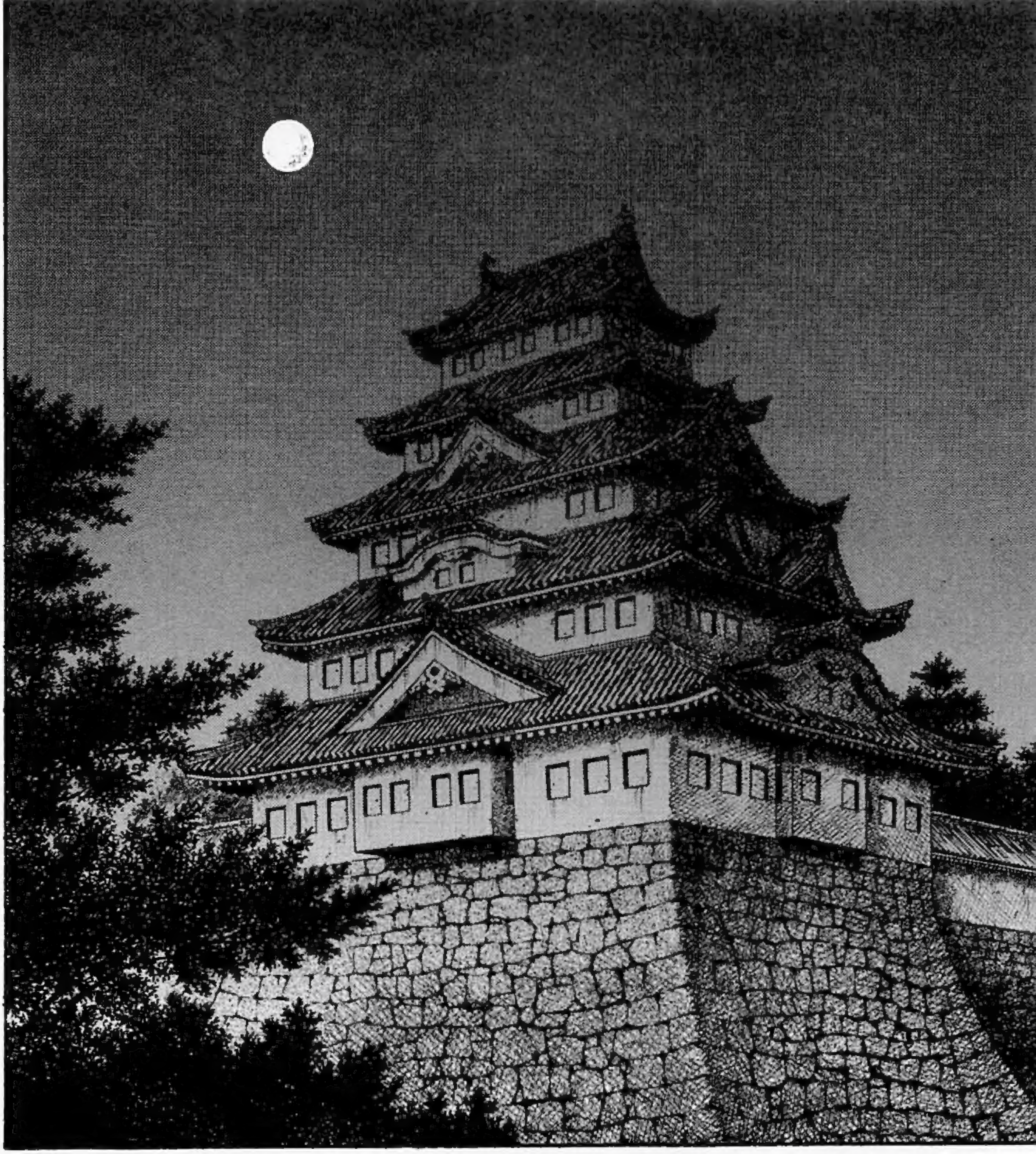

I DON'T KNOW...

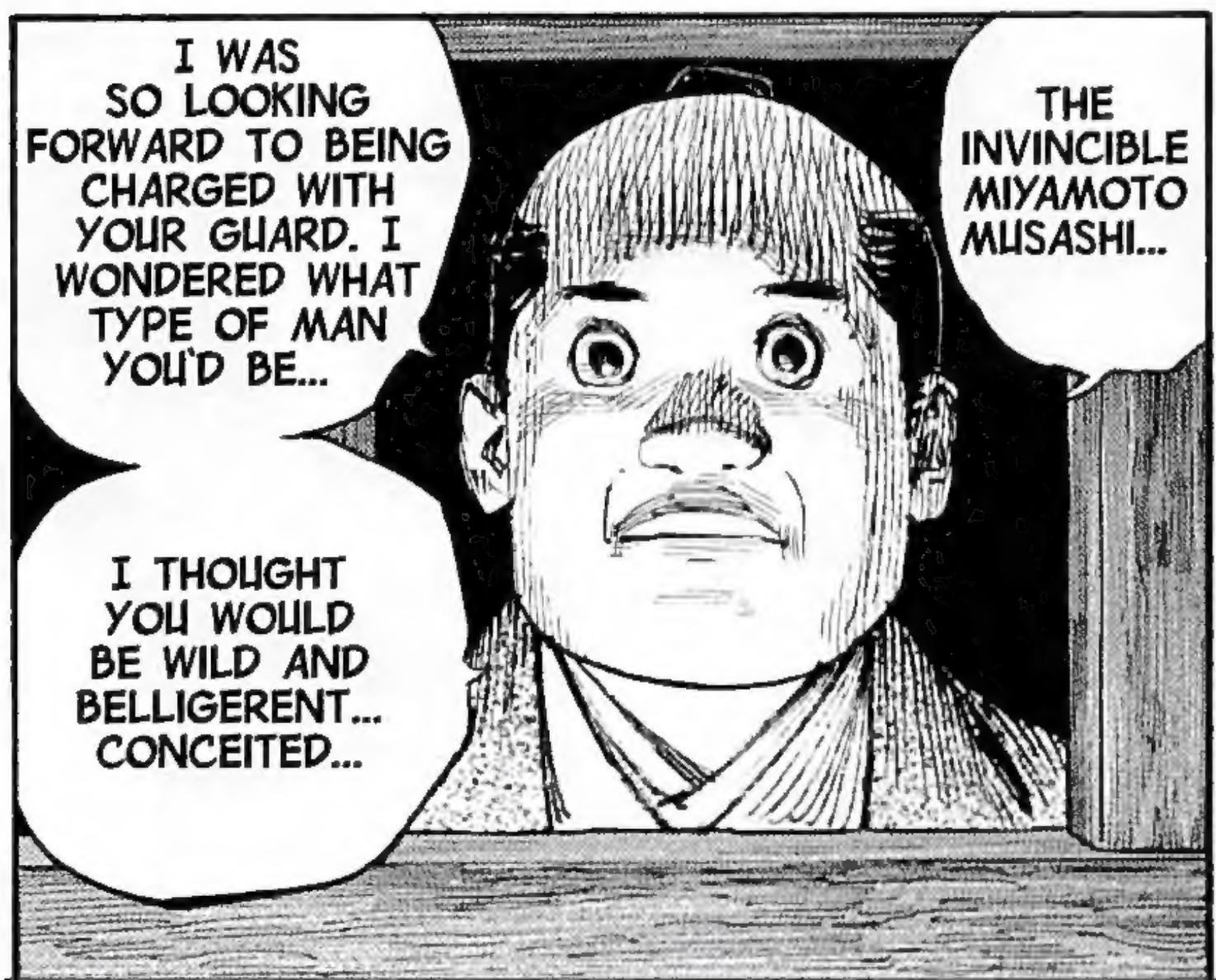
FWOOSH
AND I CAN DO THINGS LIKE THIS.
SOMEHOW I KNOW LOTS OF THINGS NOW.
WHOA!

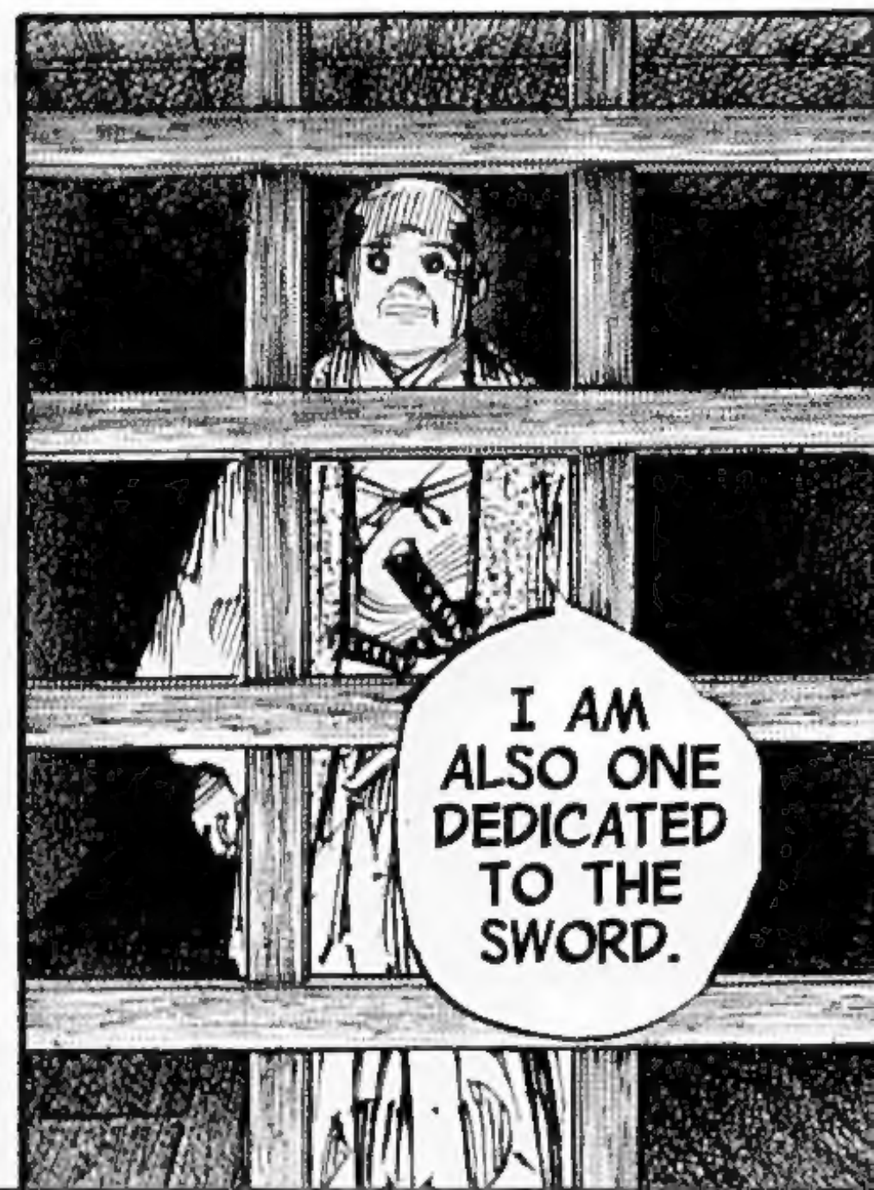
...YOU'RE THE WOMAN MUSASHI HOLDS DEAR.
PERHAPS IT'S BECAUSE...

...
WHO TOLD YOU THAT?
I KNOW LOTS OF THINGS.

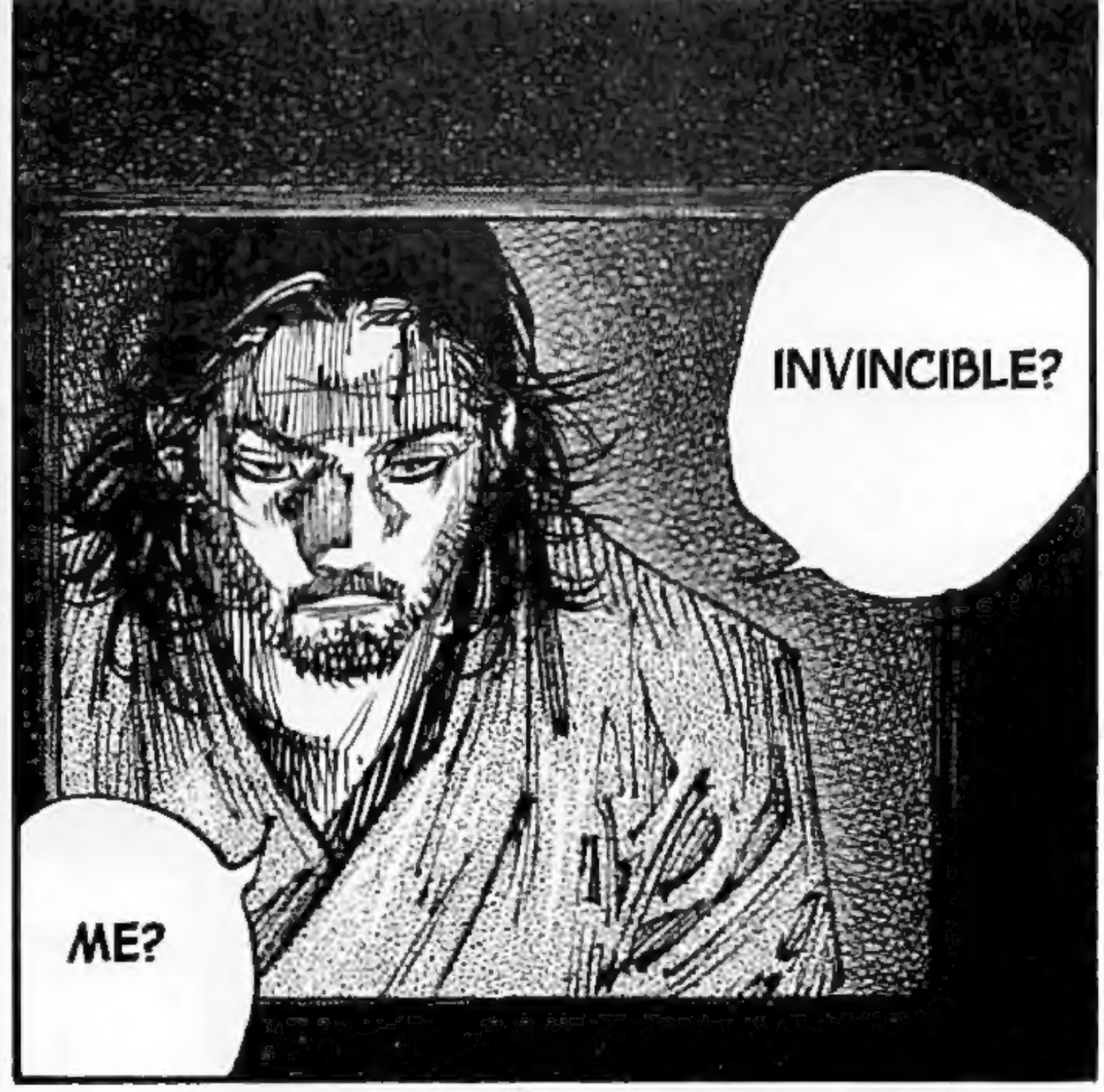





I WAS SO LOOKING FORWARD TO BEING CHARGED WITH YOUR GUARD. I WONDERED WHAT TYPE OF MAN YOU'D BE...
THE INVINCIBLE MIYAMOTO MUSASHI...
I THOUGHT YOU WOULD BE WILD AND BELLIGERENT... CONCEITED...


I AM ALSO ONE DEDICATED TO THE SWORD.

NO ONE ELSE IN THIS WORLD COULD HAVE ACCOMPLISHED WHAT YOU DID.


INVINCIBLE?
ME?

I AM SURPRISED TO FIND YOU...
...SO SOFT-SPOKEN.
PLEASE ASK OF ME ANYTHING YOU MAY NEED.

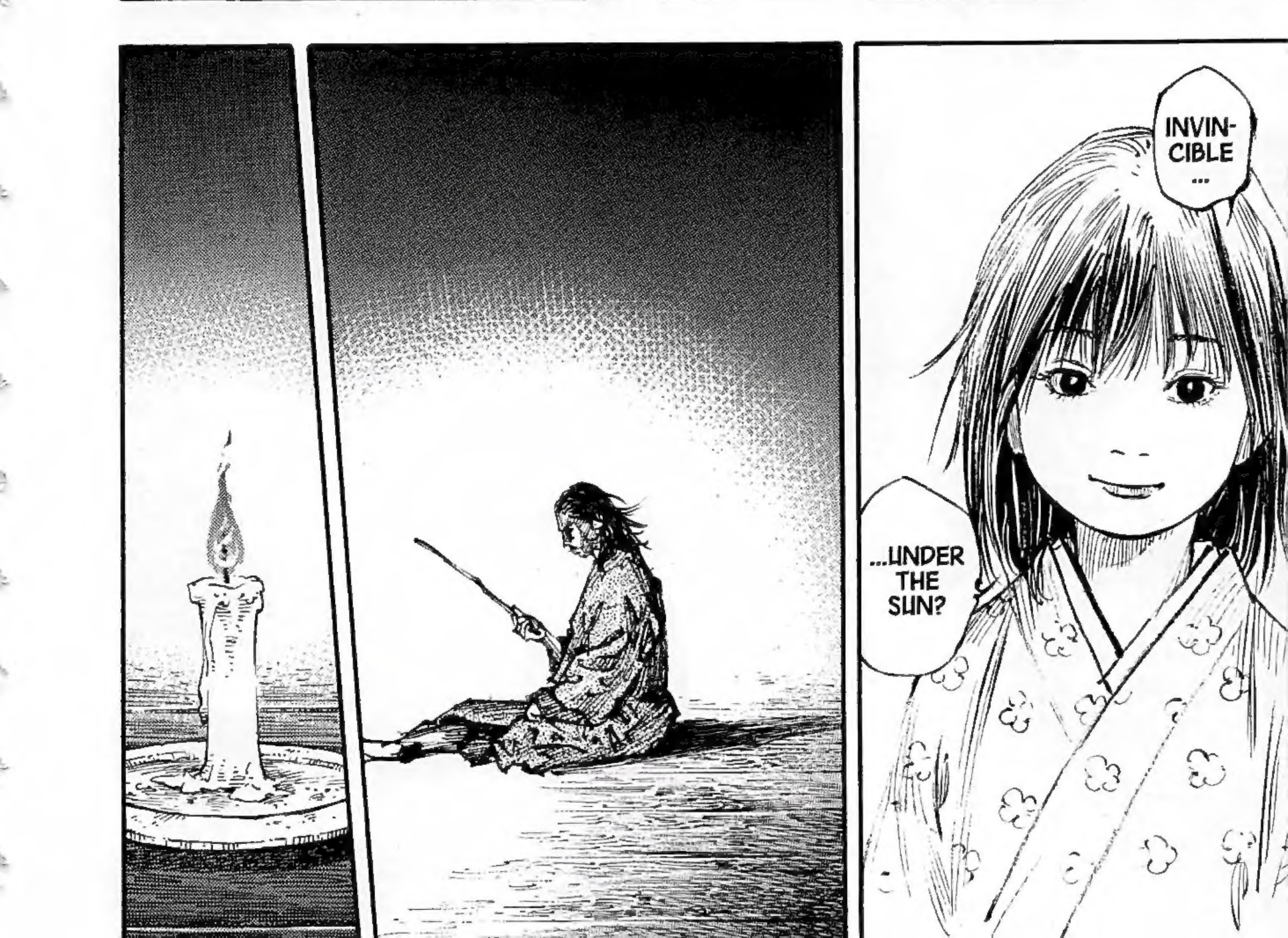
YOU ARE INDEED INVINCIBLE.

DON'T TELL A SOUL, OTSŪ.

INVINCIBLE UNDER THE SUN...

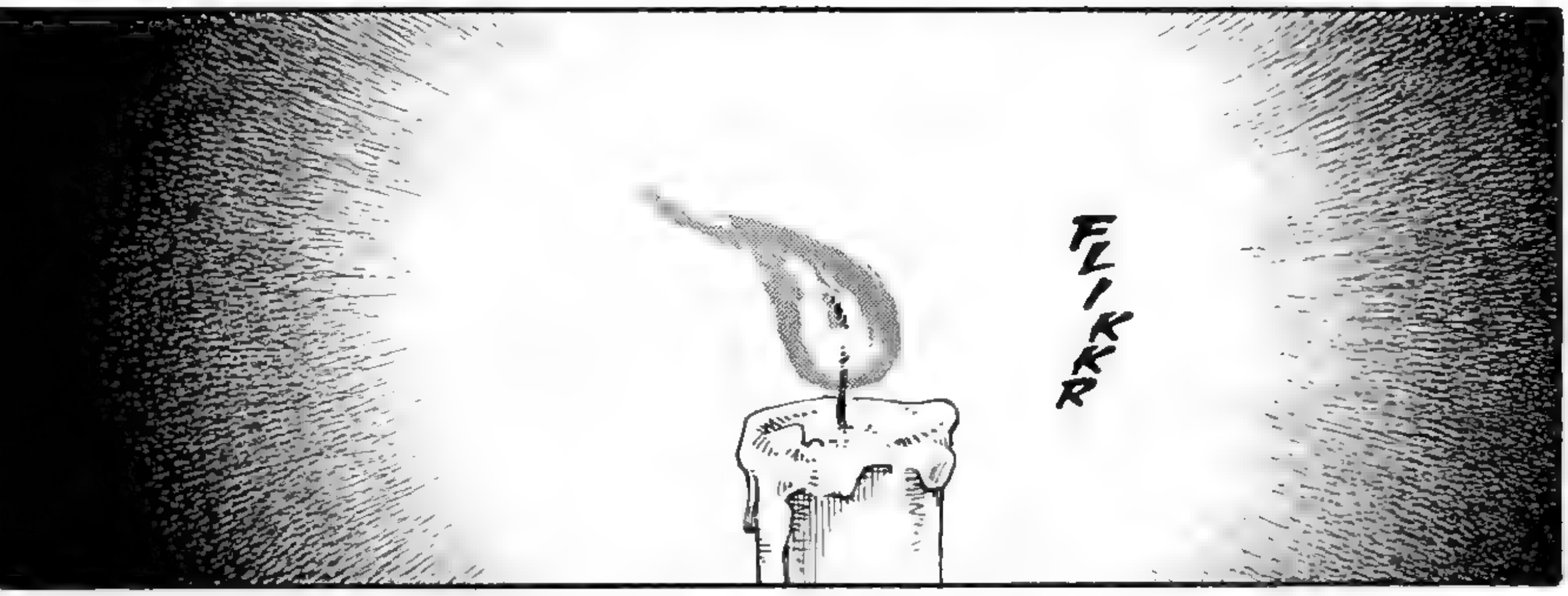
...EVERYONE WILL HAVE TO KNOW WHO I AM.

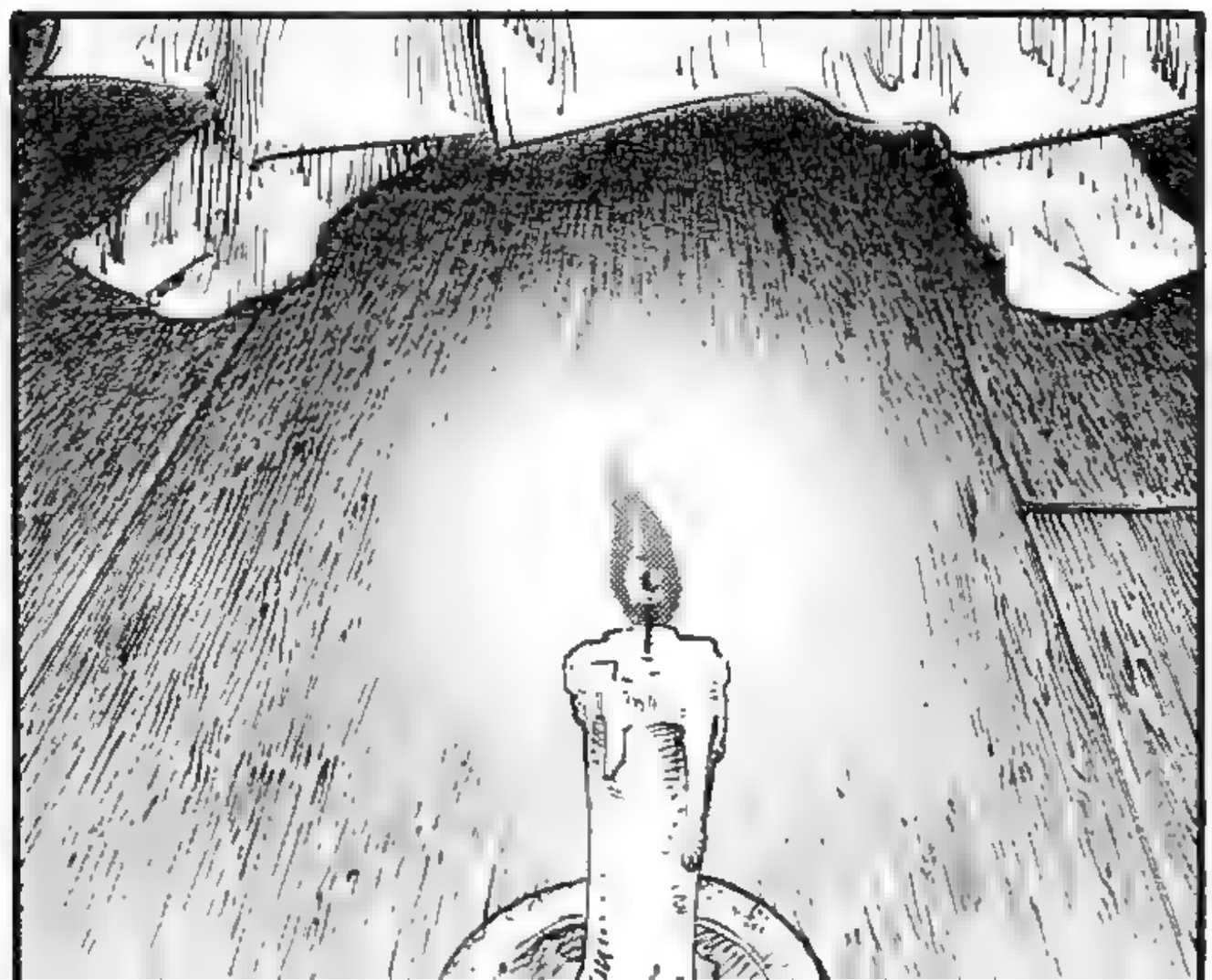
I WANT TO BE SO STRONG...

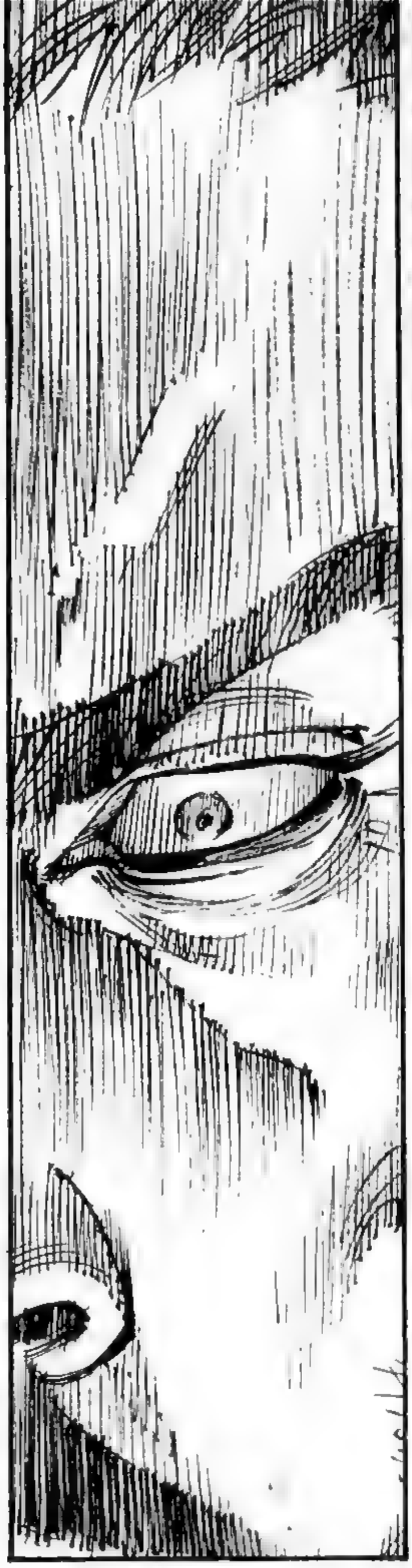


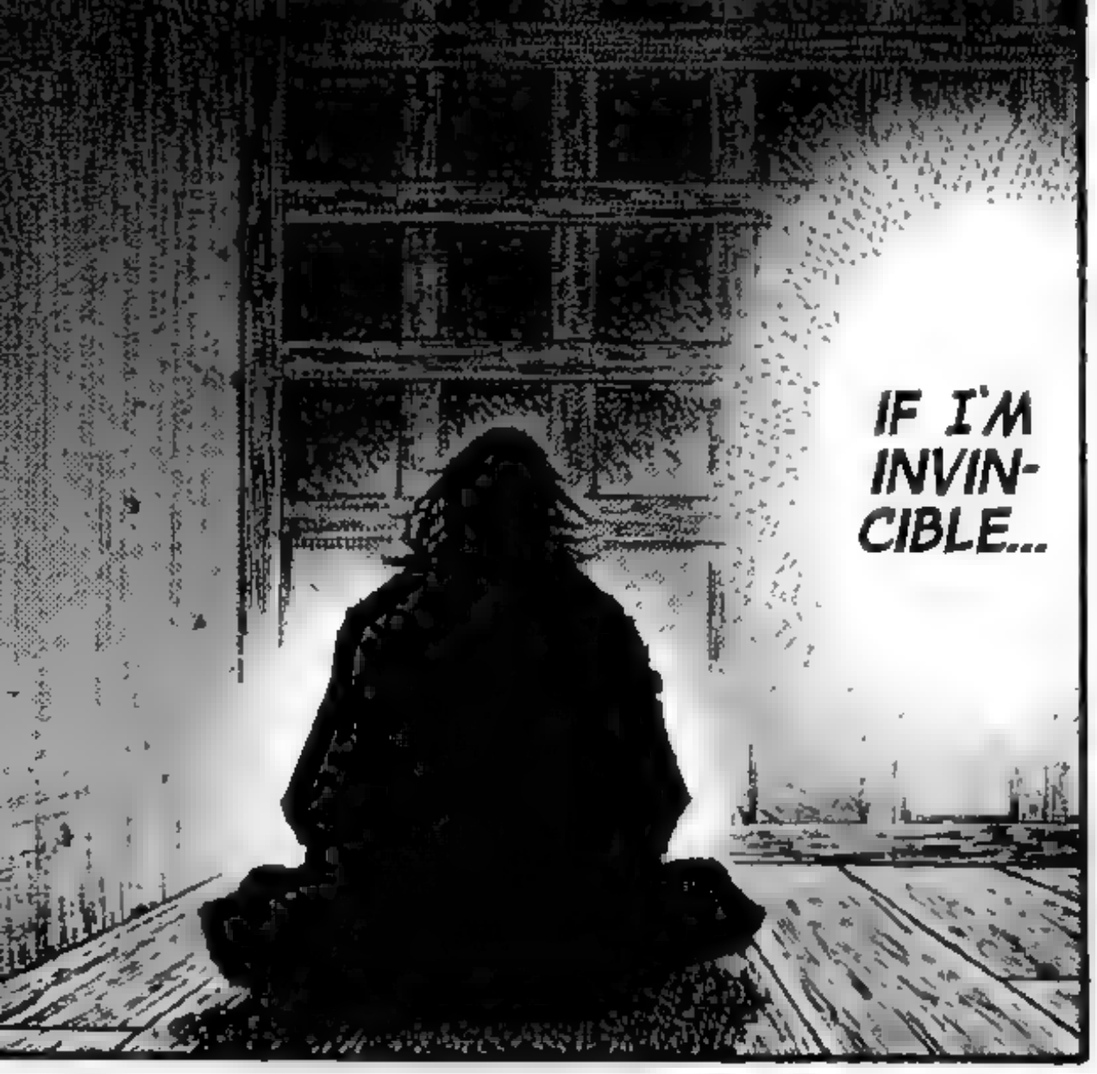
YOU ARE INDEED...

...INVINCIBLE.








IF I'M INVIN-CIBLE...

WHAT ABOUT ...

...ALL THE OTHERS?
HRMPH

INVINCIBLE
UNDER
THE SUN.

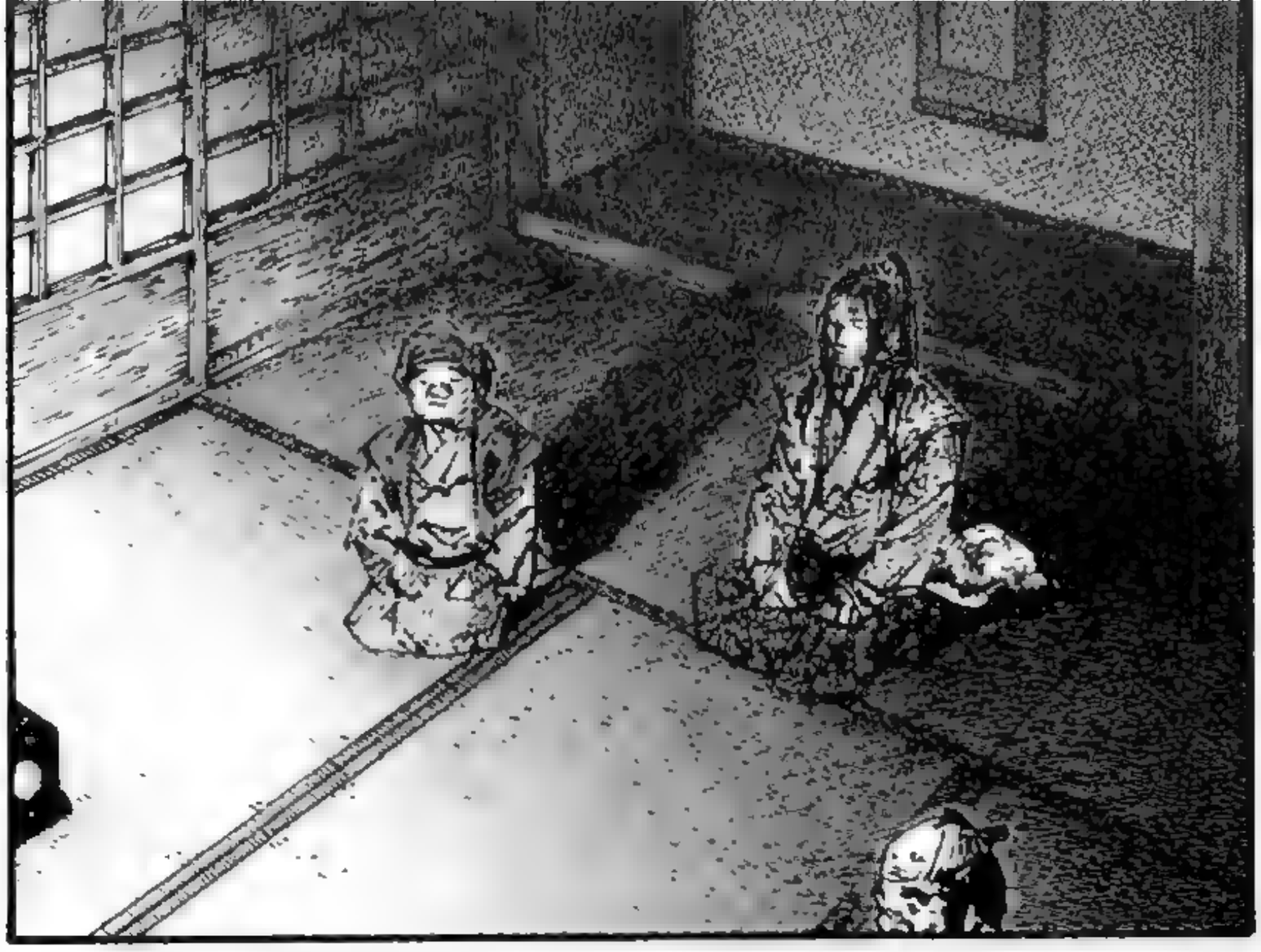
OLD MAN YAGYU...

YOU WERE RIGHT.

FWUMP

HA HA...

IT'S OVER.



...

...
UH...
OGA-
WA...

...

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?!

I SAW IT... I FELT IT WITH MY BODY...

IT LOOKED LIKE A SWORD...

WAS IT REALLY JUST A STICK?

MY INSTINCTS TOLD ME...

...IT WAS A SWORD.

HEY.
COME NOW.
GO BACK!
YOUR TIME ISN'T UP YET.
GRANDPA ?!

IT'S OVER.

...I'VE PURSUED IT WITH A PASSION ALL MY LIFE...

AND NOW IT'S COME TO AN ABRUPT END.

THAT GOAL...

I'VE BEEN AFTER ONE THING...

AS OF TODAY, I AM GIVING UP THE SWORD.

?!

WHAT?!

SIR IWAMA.

I CAN NEVER GO BACK.

?

I DON'T UNDER-STAND.

WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!

I CONCEDE TO YOU, KOJIRŌ.

SH
HHHH
FSS

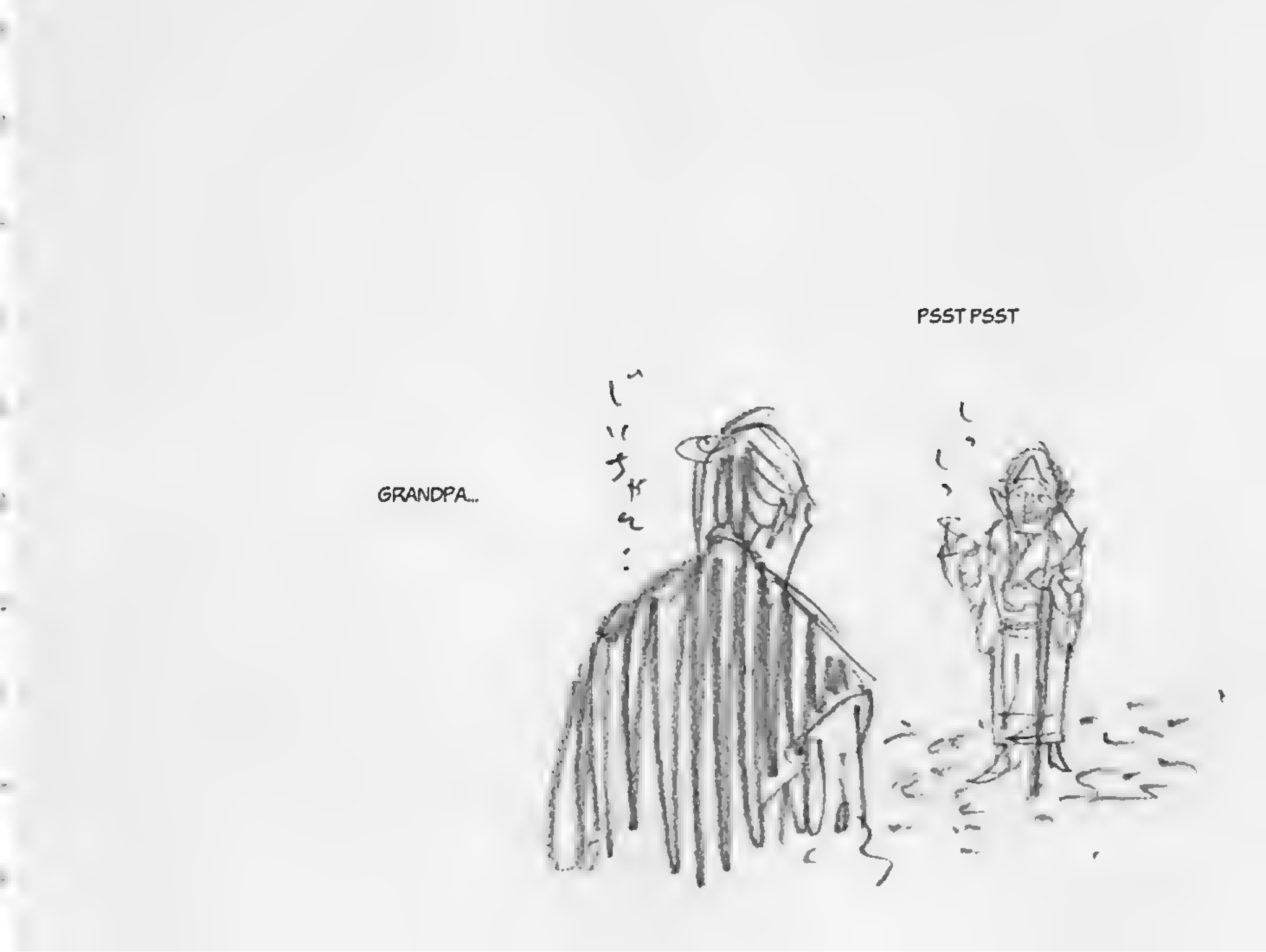
LOOKS LIKE HE'S NEVER BEEN ABOARD A SHIP EITHER.
HA HA

I BET YOU'VE NEVER BEEN TO KYUSHU, KOJIRŌ!!
FSSSH
AUHH...

FWP

FWP

AHHH


PSST PSST
GRANDPA...

AUH!

AH!

...

IWAMA.

OGAWA!

SO YOU'VE MADE YOUR DECISION?

# #262 | Farewell

I CANNOT DECEIVE THE SWORD.

BUT I HAVE NO INTENTION TO FIGHT...

...AGAINST ANYONE.

I CAN STILL BE AN INSTRUCTOR.

HOW CAN YOU GIVE UP THE SWORD?

OGAWA ...

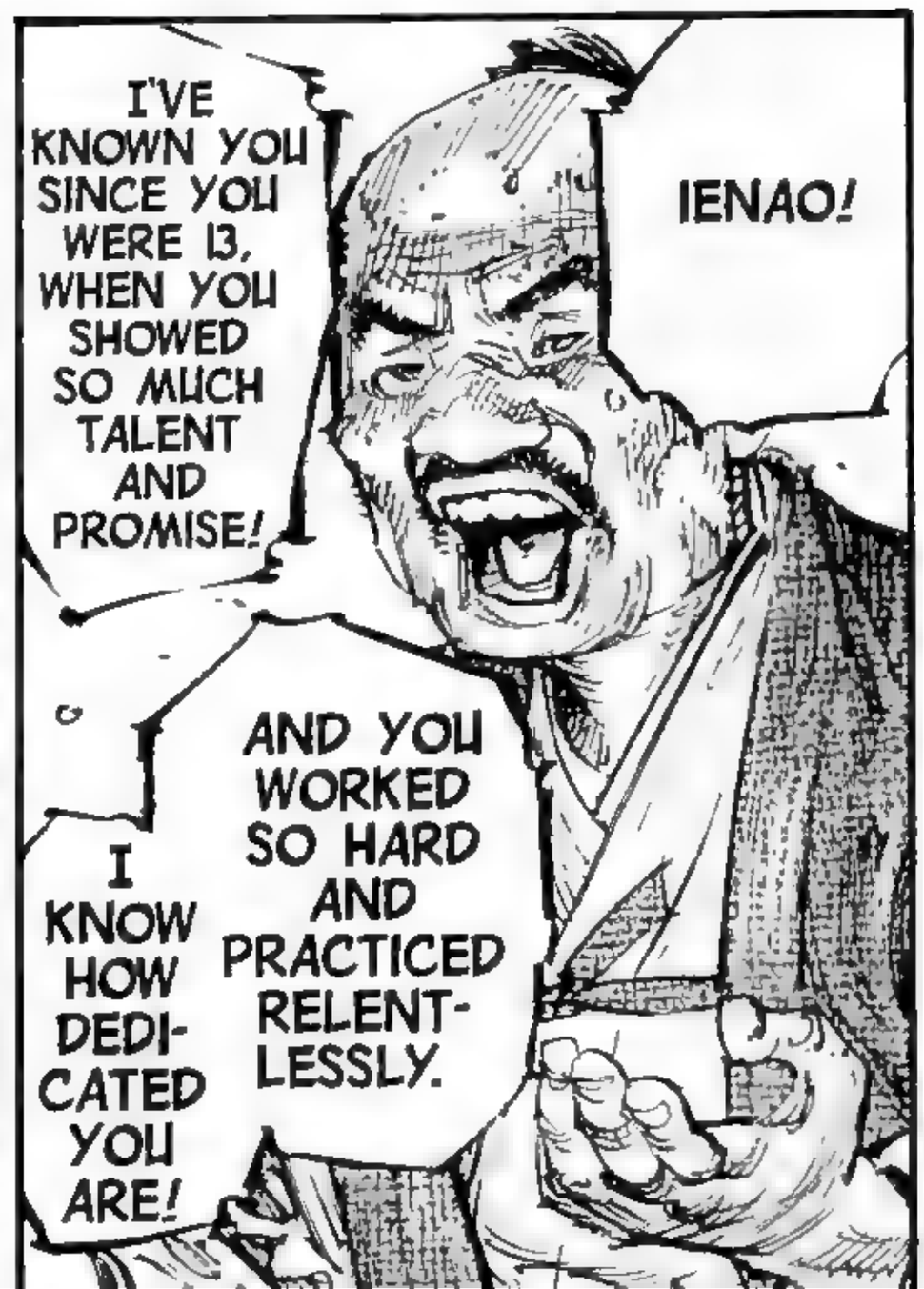
WHAT ABOUT YOUR POSITION AS INSTRUCTOR FOR THE KOKURA HOSOKAWA FAMILY?!

YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TALENT!

OGAWA!

THANK YOU FOR ALL YOU HAVE DONE FOR ME, IWAMA.

THE PATH HAS COME TO AN END FOR ME.



IS THIS BECAUSE YOU REALIZE NO MATTER HOW HARD YOU TRAIN...
...YOU WILL NEVER SURPASS ANOTHER?

DON'T QUIT.
YOU CAN STILL BECOME STRONGER!

...

...
ZZZ
ZZZ
HEY
ARE YOU REFERRING TO KOJIRŌ?

THANK YOU, SIR HON'AMI.
I WAS BLIND TO THAT DIFFERENCE THREE YEARS AGO.

...!

...THEN THE STRONGER YOU ARE...
IF STRENGTH CAN BE MEASURED IN LEVELS...
...THE MORE YOU REALIZE HOW TRULY FAR IT IS TO REACH THE NEXT LEVEL.

ARE YOU REALLY THAT STRONG, KOJIRŌ?
HEY, WAKE UP.
YOU HAVE THE FACE OF A CHILD.
AND...
...
...
HE ALMOST LOOKS LIKE A GIRL...
I MEAN...
LISTEN, OGAWA...

...YOU HAVE TO CUT DOWN EVERY PERSON WHO COMES YOUR WAY.

...TO TRULY PROVE THAT YOU ARE THE BEST...

BUT IF YOU WANT TO PROVE YOURSELF INVINCIBLE...

IN THE END...

...YOU ARE ALL ALONE AT THE TOP.

ALL EXCEPT ONE--

NO...

MOST MEN WHO ARE DEDICATED TO THE SWORD...

THEY MUST LIVE WITH THE AMBIGUOUS EVALUATIONS OF OTHERS.

THEY MUST SIMPLY BE CONTENT WITH BEING "STRONG."

THERE'S NO ONE LEFT TO RECOGNIZE WHAT YOU'VE ACHIEVED.

BUT TO GO TO SUCH LENGTHS IN THE NAME OF BEING INVINCIBLE...

...I WOULD BE LYING TO MY SWORD.

KOJIRŌ BROKE MY SPIRIT.

IF I CONTINUE FIGHTING...

...!!

...THAT MY SWORD WOULD HAVE ANY LOVE FOR ME.

IF I DID THAT, I DON'T THINK THERE'S ANY WAY...

I WANT TO BE THE BEST...

THAT IS MY NATURE...

YOU'RE STRONG! AND THAT'S GOOD ENOUGH!

DON'T GO AFTER THE WRONG THING! OGA-WA!

CONTINUE TO LIVE BY *YOUR* SWORD!

...

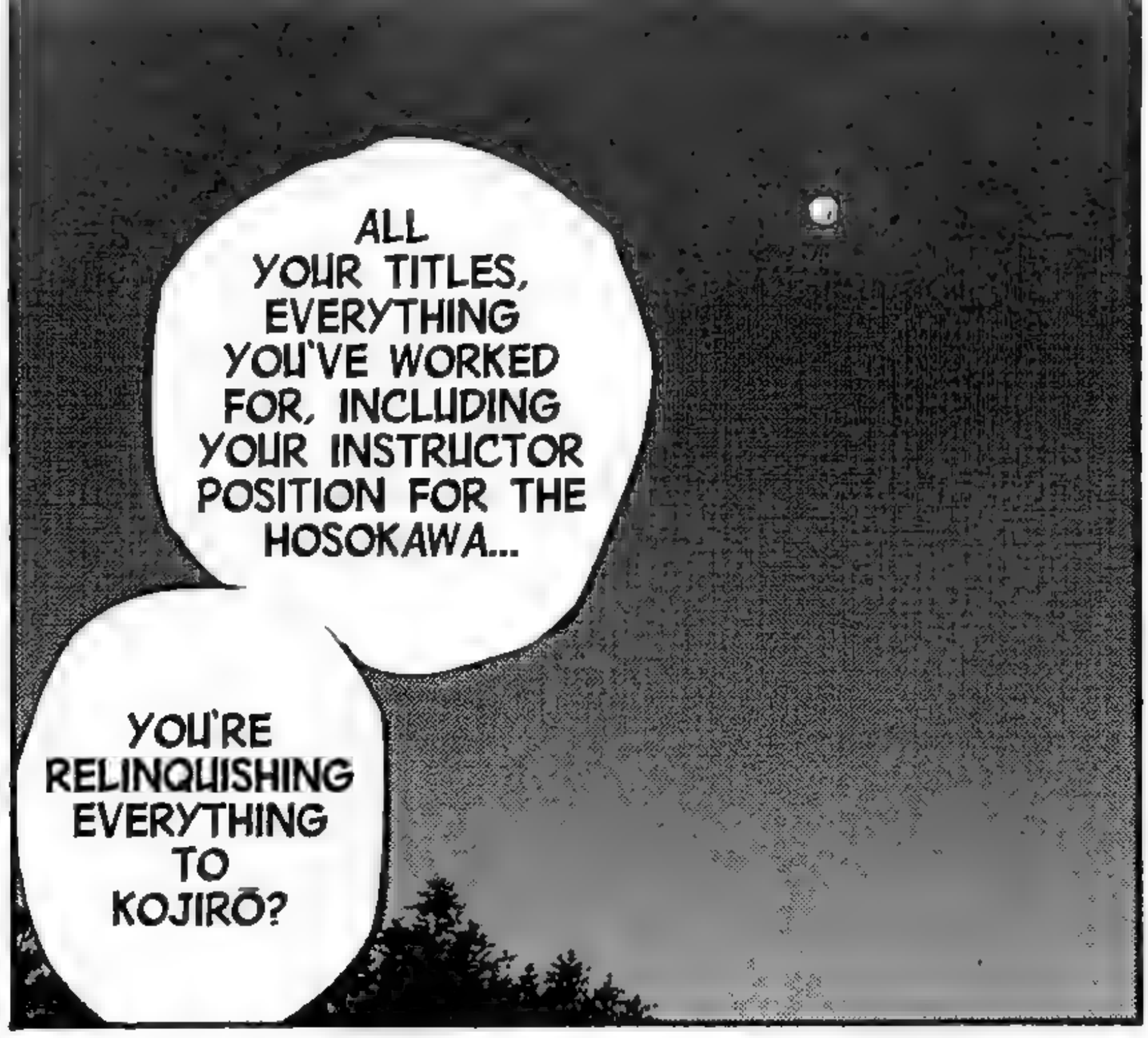
I CANNOT DECEIVE THE SWORD.

SIR HON'AMI ...

...MAY I BORROW A PEN AND SOME PAPER?

THANK YOU...

THAT'S RIGHT.

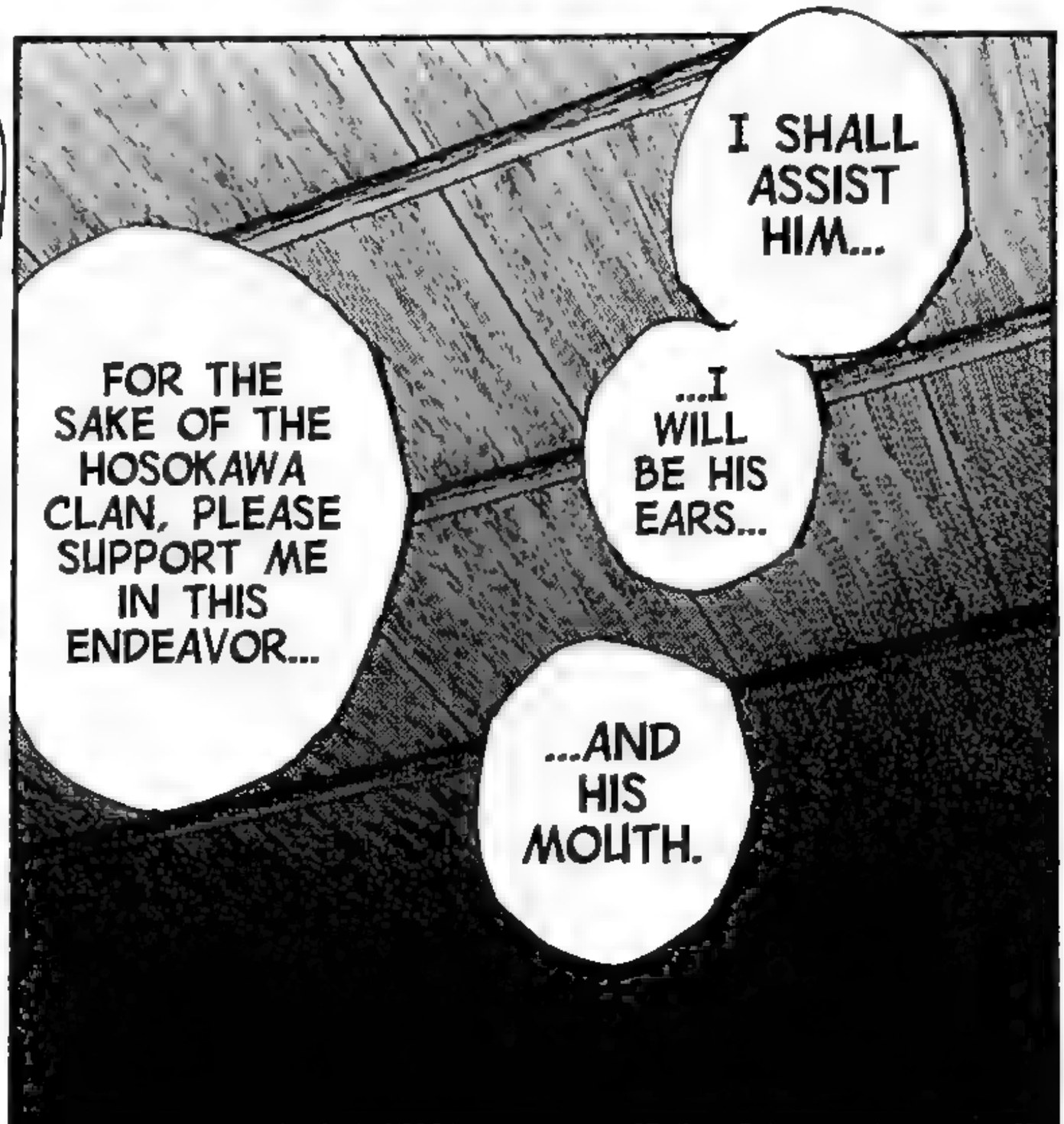

ALL YOUR TITLES, EVERYTHING YOU'VE WORKED FOR, INCLUDING YOUR INSTRUCTOR POSITION FOR THE HOSOKAWA...
YOU'RE RELINQUISHING EVERYTHING TO KOJIRŌ?

AND AS SUCH...
I SHALL WORK UNDER THE DEAF AND MUTE KOJIRŌ...

...

...
SIR IWAMA.

HMF
WELL...


I SHALL ASSIST HIM...
FOR THE SAKE OF THE HOSOKAWA CLAN, PLEASE SUPPORT ME IN THIS ENDEAVOR...
...I WILL BE HIS EARS...
...AND HIS MOUTH.

IENAO!!

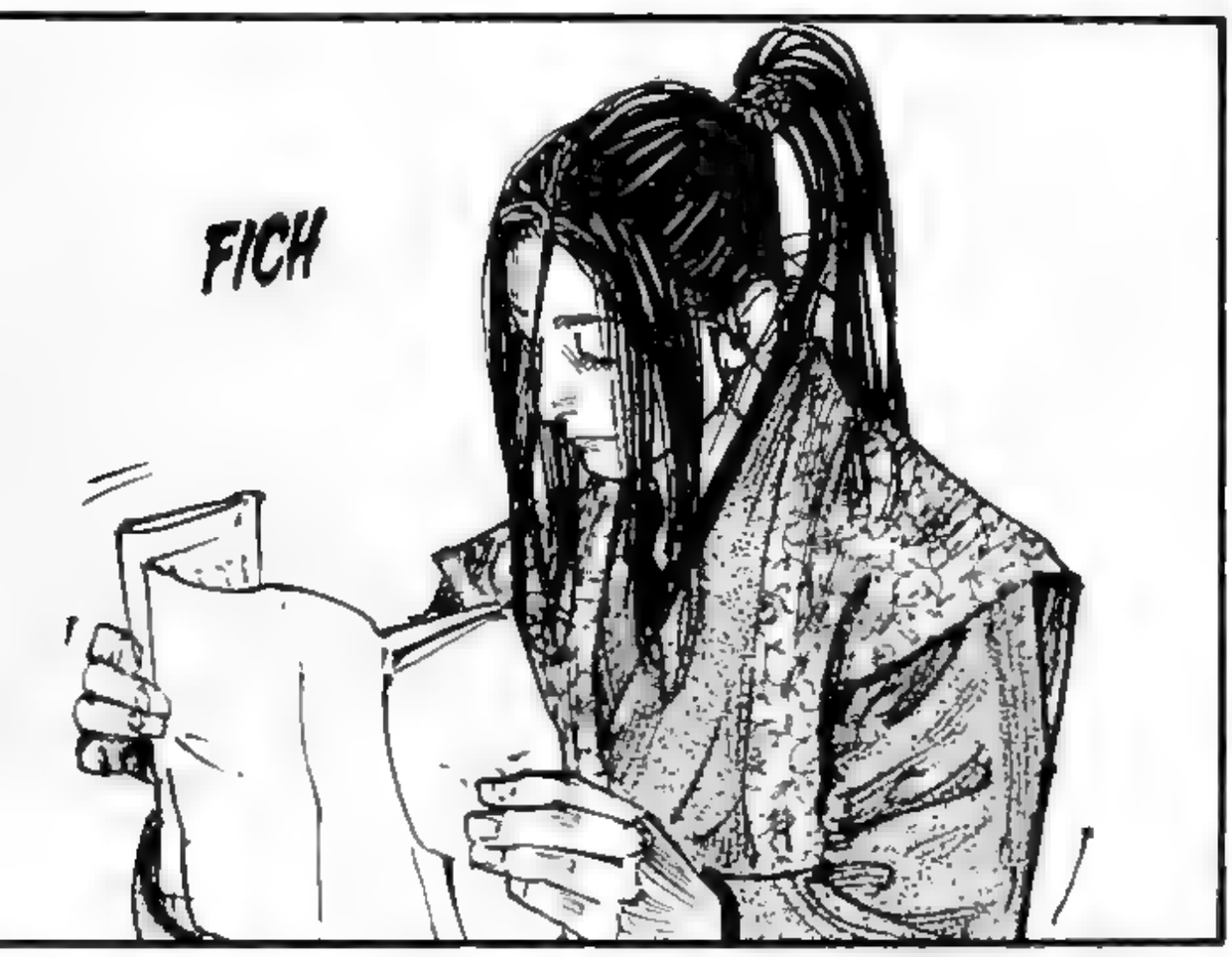
THERE'S NOTHING LEFT FOR ME TO SAY TO YOU!

HOW DARE YOU DECIDE THIS ALL ON YOUR OWN!

SHWF
SHWF SHWF
SHWF
...
CALM DOWN, MOTHER ...
YOU'RE MAKING A MESS.

SHWF
SHWF
...

THE TEA IS READY.


FICH

.....

PERHAPS WE WERE MEANT TO VISIT YOU HERE, KŌETSU...
IT JUST MAY BE THAT THE GODS OR BUDDHA MEANT FOR US TO MEET...

HUH?
?
?

I BELIEVE ANYONE WHO PROVES HIMSELF THROUGH HIS SWORD, REGARDLESS OF WHERE HE CAME FROM, IS WORTHY OF RESPECT!
...WE WELCOME YOU INTO OUR CLAN!
GANRYŪ SASAKI KOJIRŌ...

GRP

THIS IS JUST WHAT WE WERE HOPING FOR, KŌETSU...
THIS IS A GOOD THING.

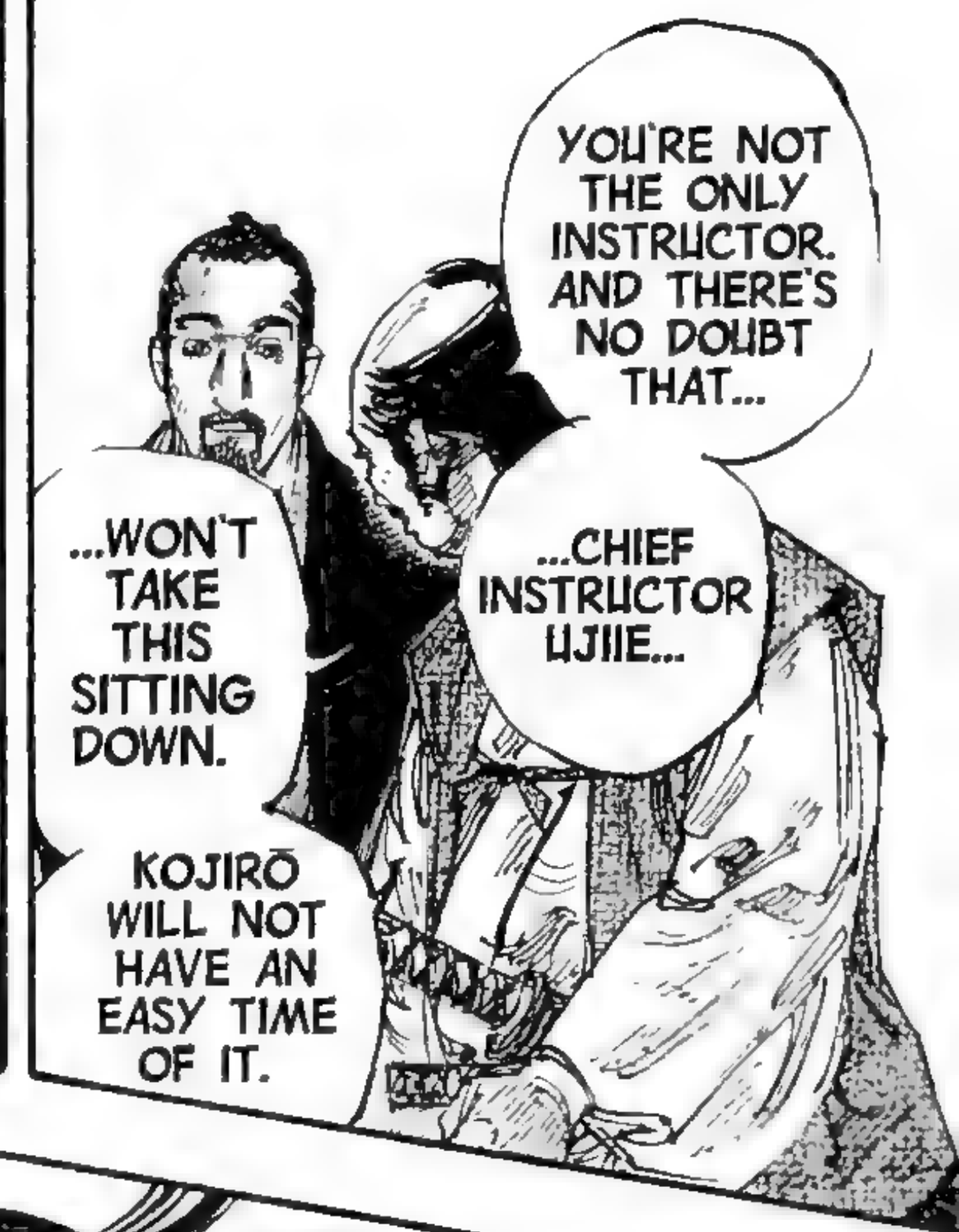
THIS IS INDEED A GOOD THING.

THERE WILL BE A PLACE WHERE HE BELONGS...

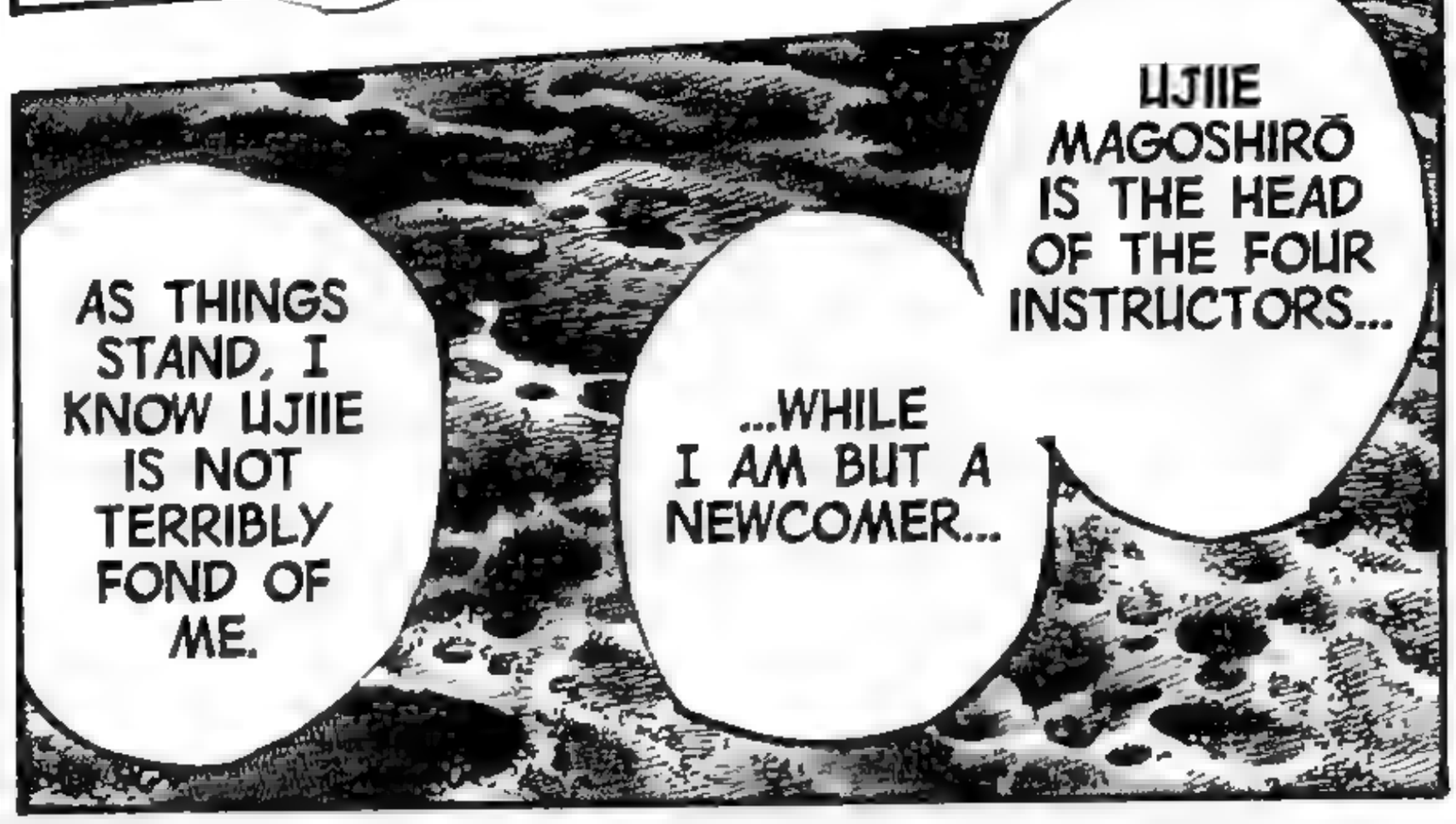
FAREWELL, KOJIRŌ.

HOW-EVER...
...THE KOKURA HOSOKAWA IS A PROUD CLAN, PARTICULARLY WHEN IT COMES TO THEIR MARTIAL SKILLS.
GANRYŪ SASAKI KOJIRŌ!
BUT EVEN THE VERY EXISTENCE OF THIS MAN WAS IN QUESTION.
I'VE HEARD THE STORIES ABOUT HIM.
AND NOW HE'S HERE BEFORE US...
...JOINING OUR CLAN.

YES...
GRIN


YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY INSTRUCTOR. AND THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT...
...WON'T TAKE THIS SITTING DOWN.
...CHIEF INSTRUCTOR UJIIE...
KOJIRŌ WILL NOT HAVE AN EASY TIME OF IT.

I SUPPOSE WE'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE.




HE WILL NOT READILY ACCEPT THIS PLAN OF MINE...

...FOR ME TO GIVE UP THE SWORD AND BRING IN SOMEONE ELSE TO REPLACE ME...

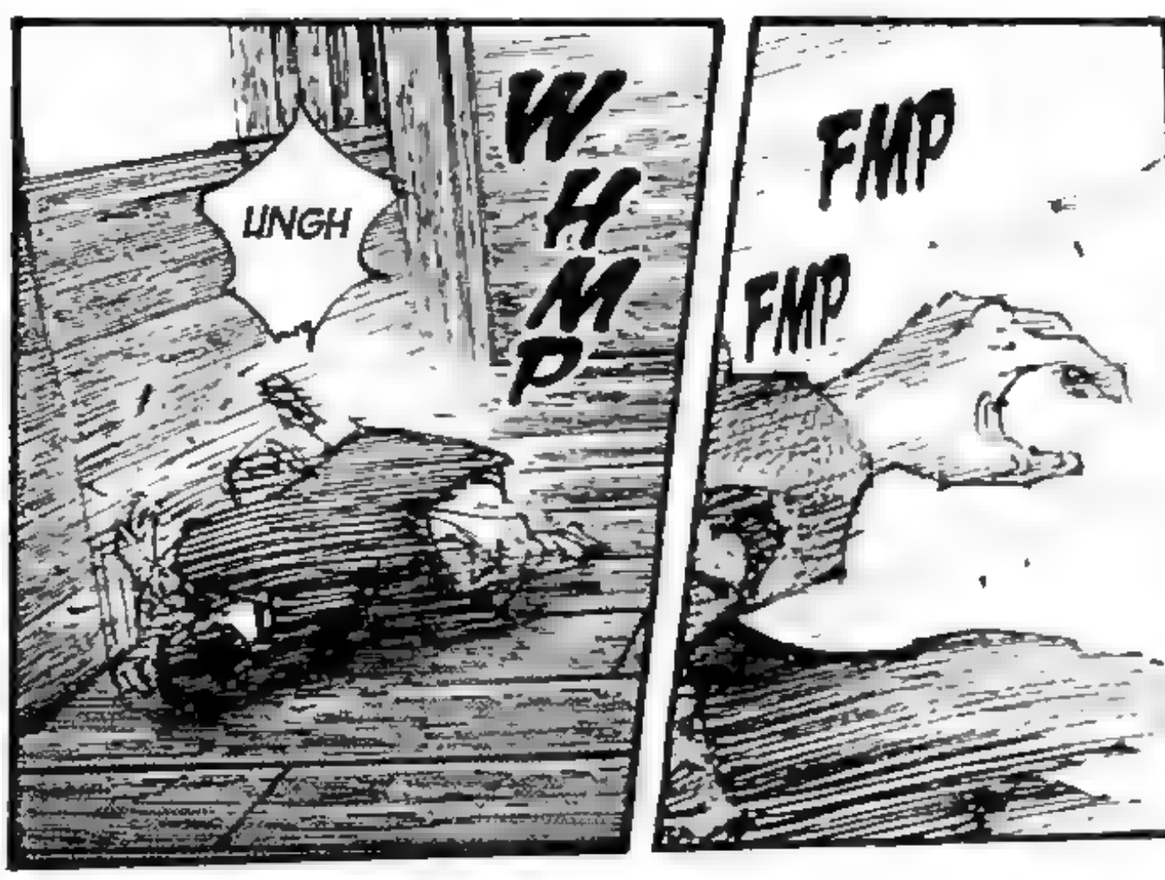
# #263 | Dream Fulfilled

...THE HOSOKAWA HAS EVERYTHING TO GAIN BY THIS.
IF ALL GOES AS IT SHOULD ...
AND HOW'S THAT?
WHAT'RE YOU THINKING, OGAWA?
YOU'RE DISRUPTING THE ORDER OF THE CLAN.
NOT AT ALL, IWAMA!
...
ONLY THE STRONG SURVIVE.
OGAWA?

OGAWA!
ARGH !!!!
YAHH!!
HUFF
WHAT THE--?!
?

WHUD

ARGH !!!!
ARGH !!!!


UNGH
WHMP
FMP
FMP

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
I HAD TO GET IT ALL OUT!
HUF

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

THE FRUSTRATION OF HAVING TO GIVE UP THE SWORD...

KRIK KRIK

HUF

...THE LONELINESS...

...!!

HAD TO GET IT OUT...

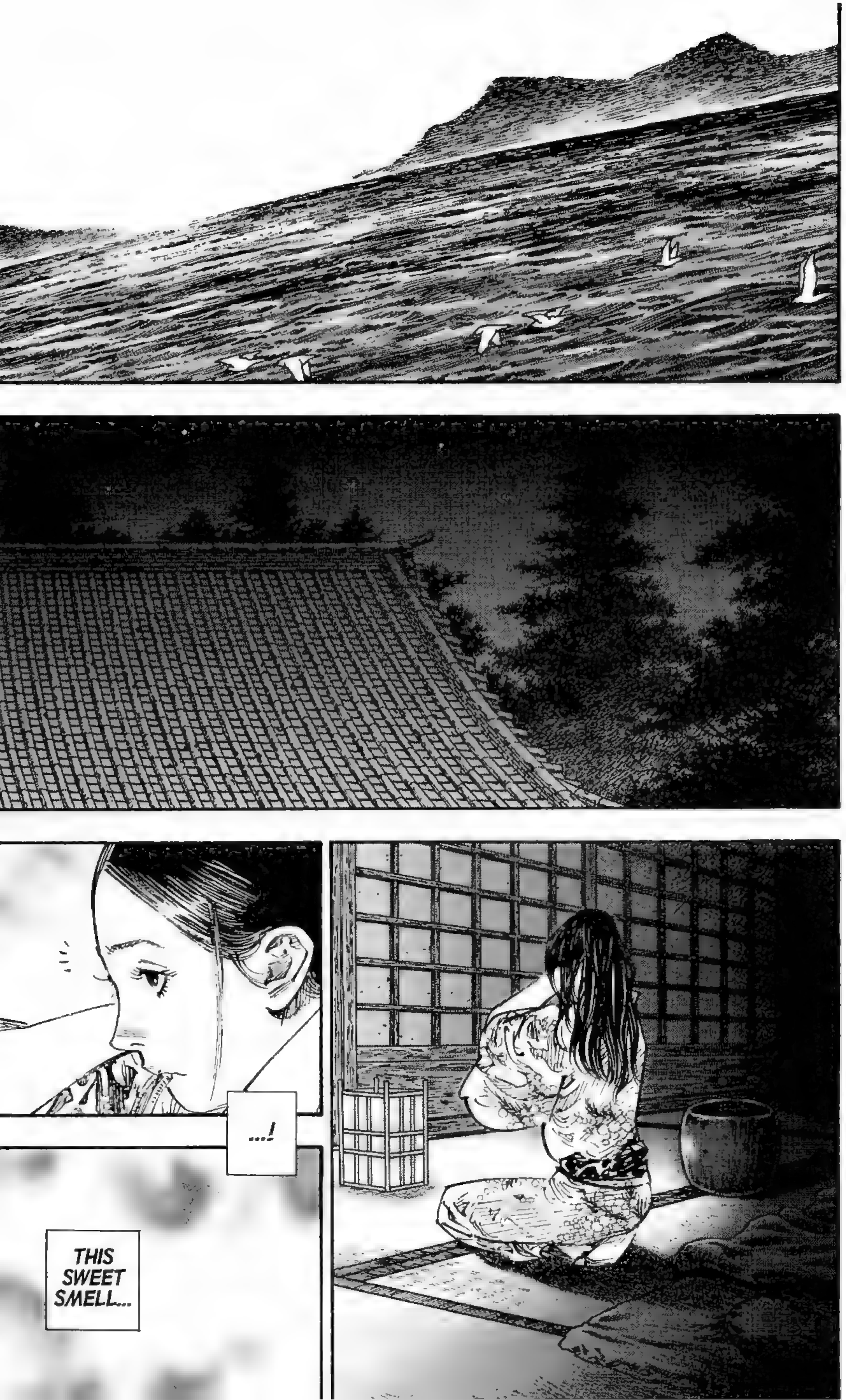
HUF

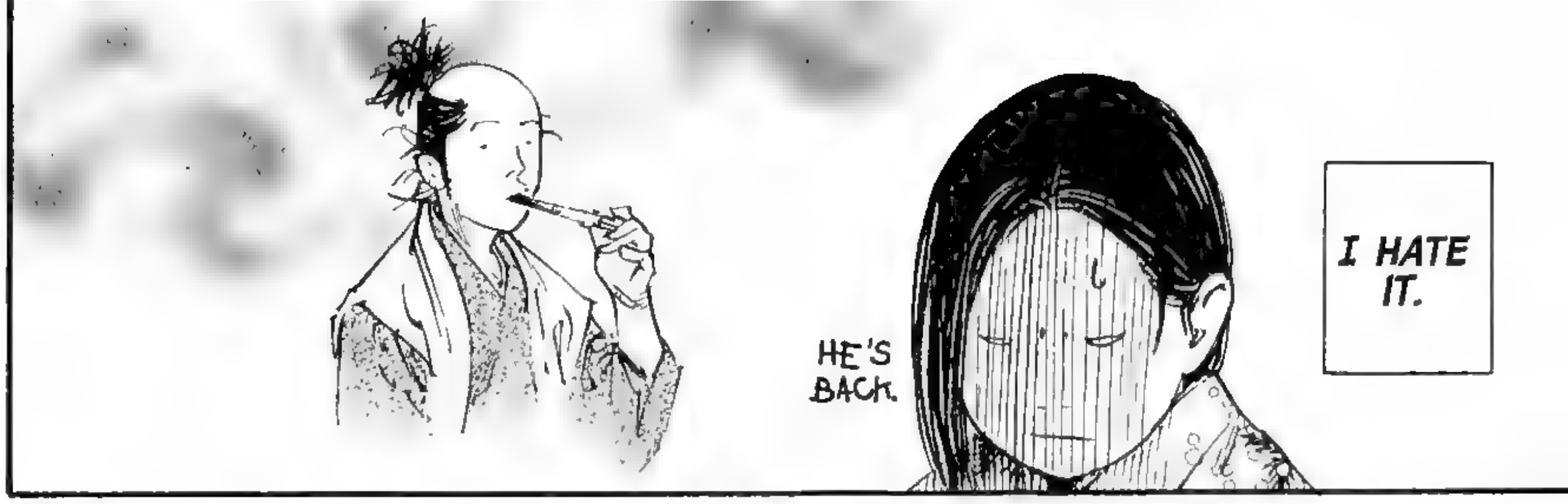
HUF

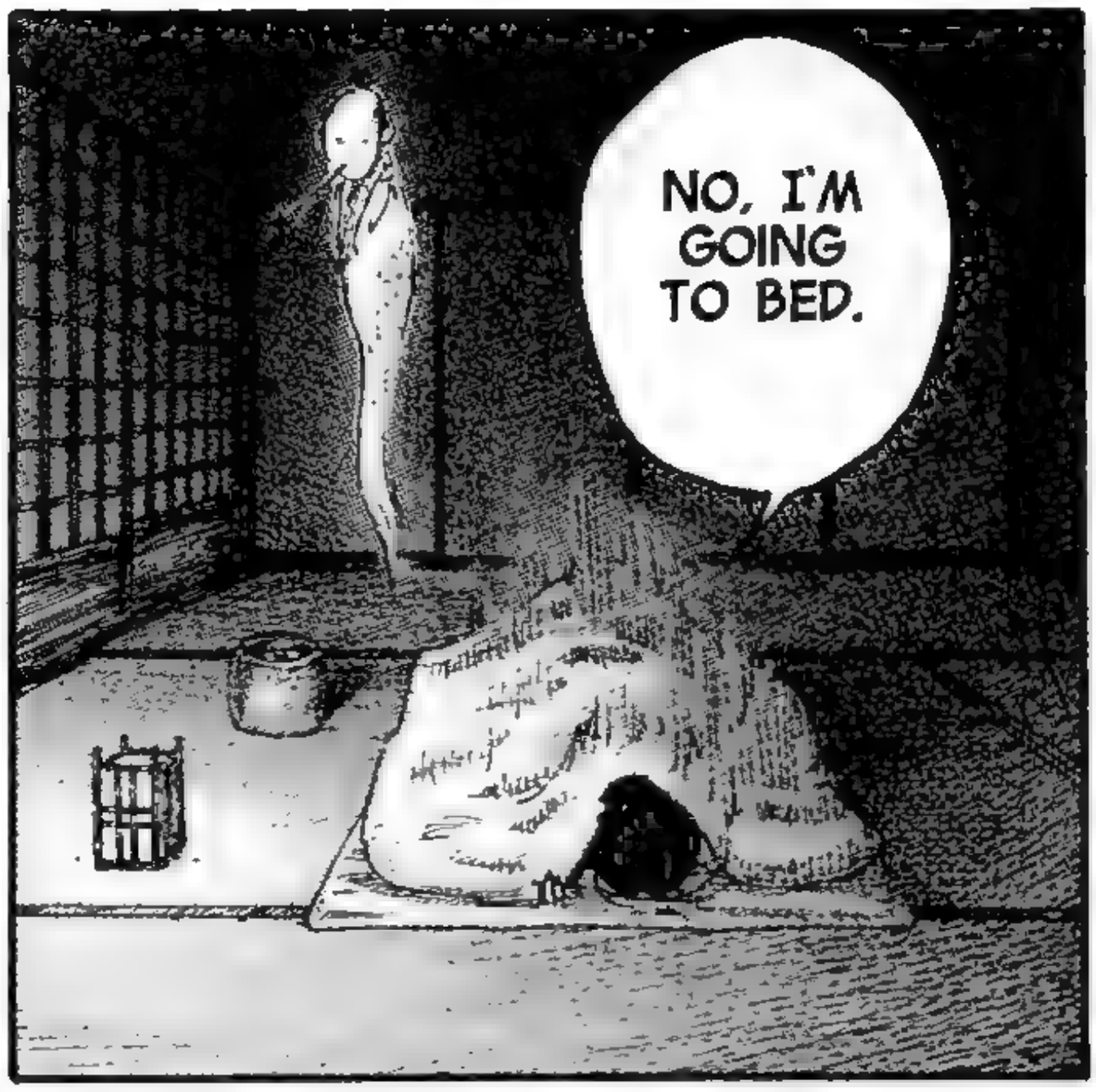
I WANT TO SEE THE END OF MY UNFULFILLED DREAMS...
TO LIVE BY WAY OF THE SWORD.

HEY, YOU! THAT'S DANGER-OUS.
AUHH ...
GET DOWN!
HEY!

I CAN FIND OUT BY STAYING BY YOUR SIDE, KOJIRŌ.
HOW FAR CAN ONE GET IN THESE CHANGING TIMES?


...!
THIS SWEET SMELL...


HE'S BACK.
I HATE IT.

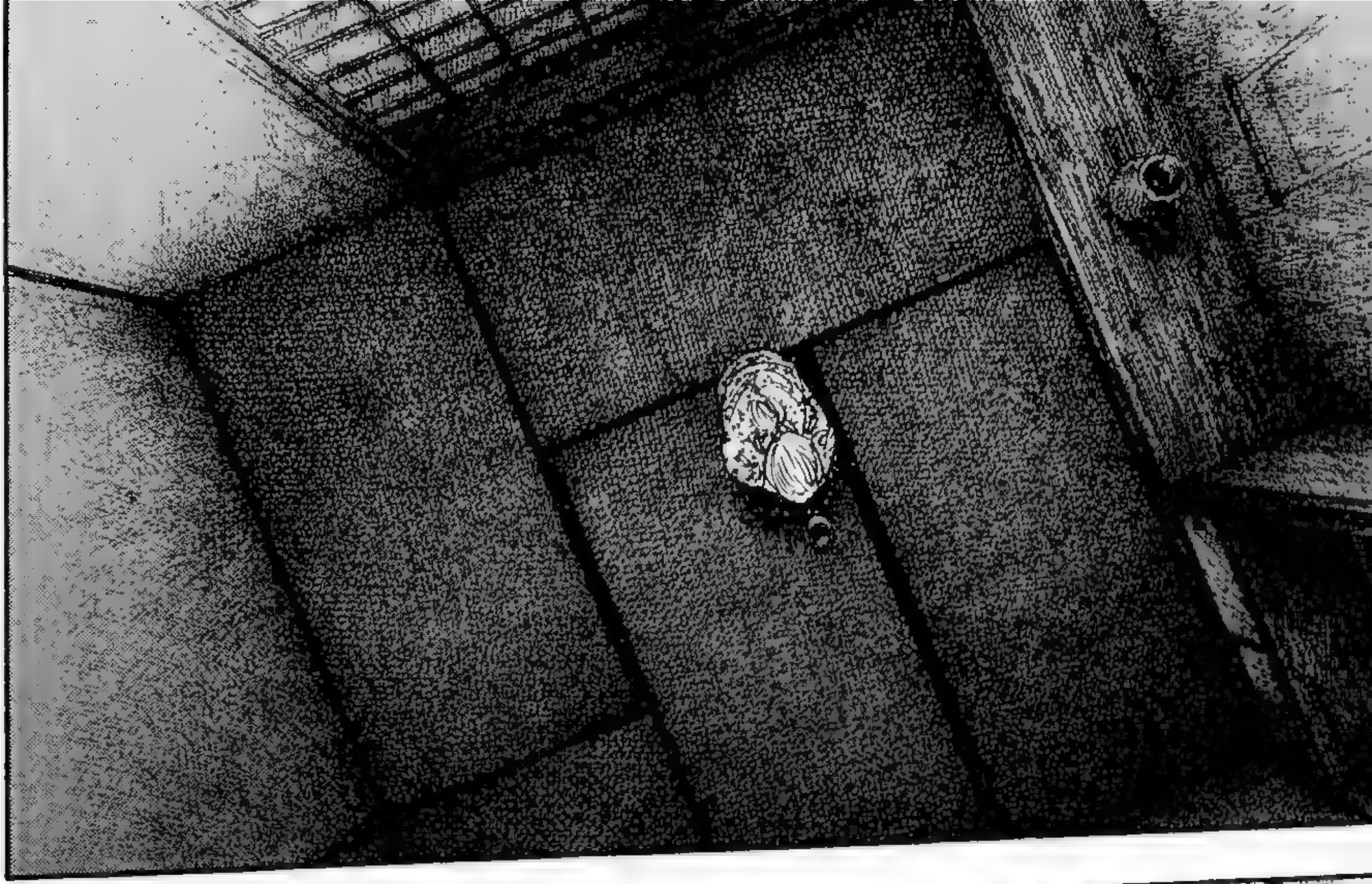

NO, I'M GOING TO BED.

I'VE HAD IT UP TO HERE WITH THIS GHOST!
WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?!

COME WITH ME, OTSU.
HUH?

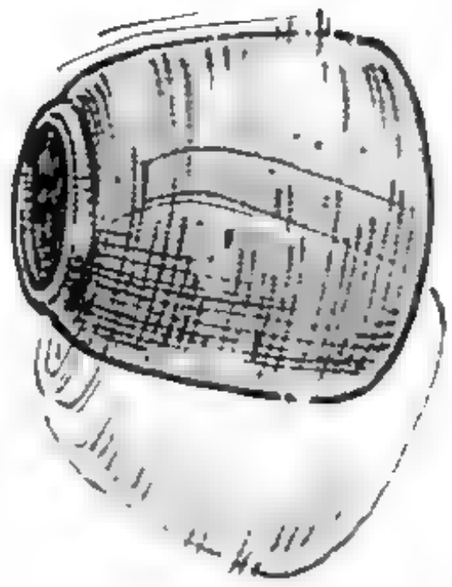
!!

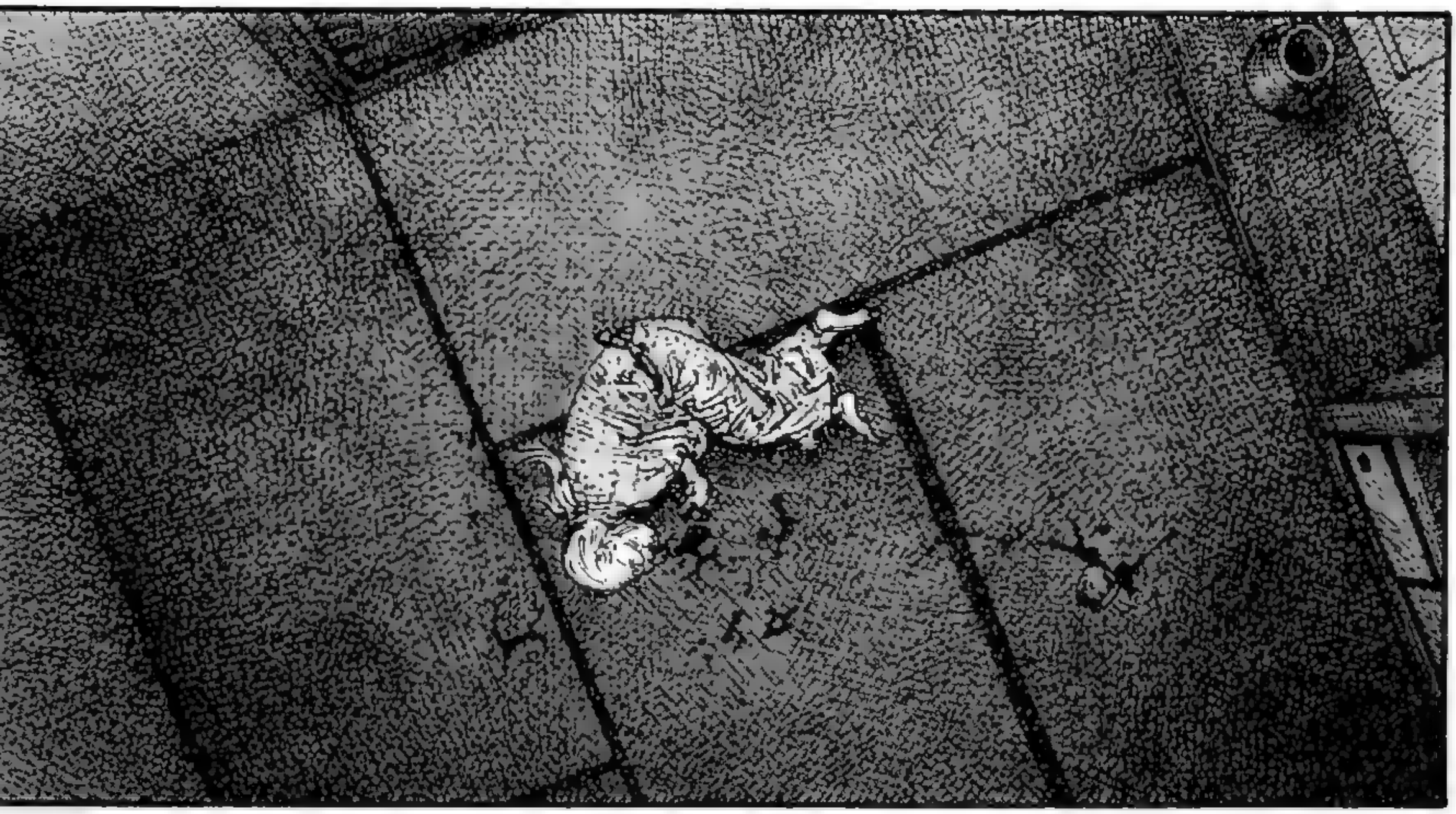
...



...POISON!

TH-
THAT'S...





MOTHER ...

HEY!

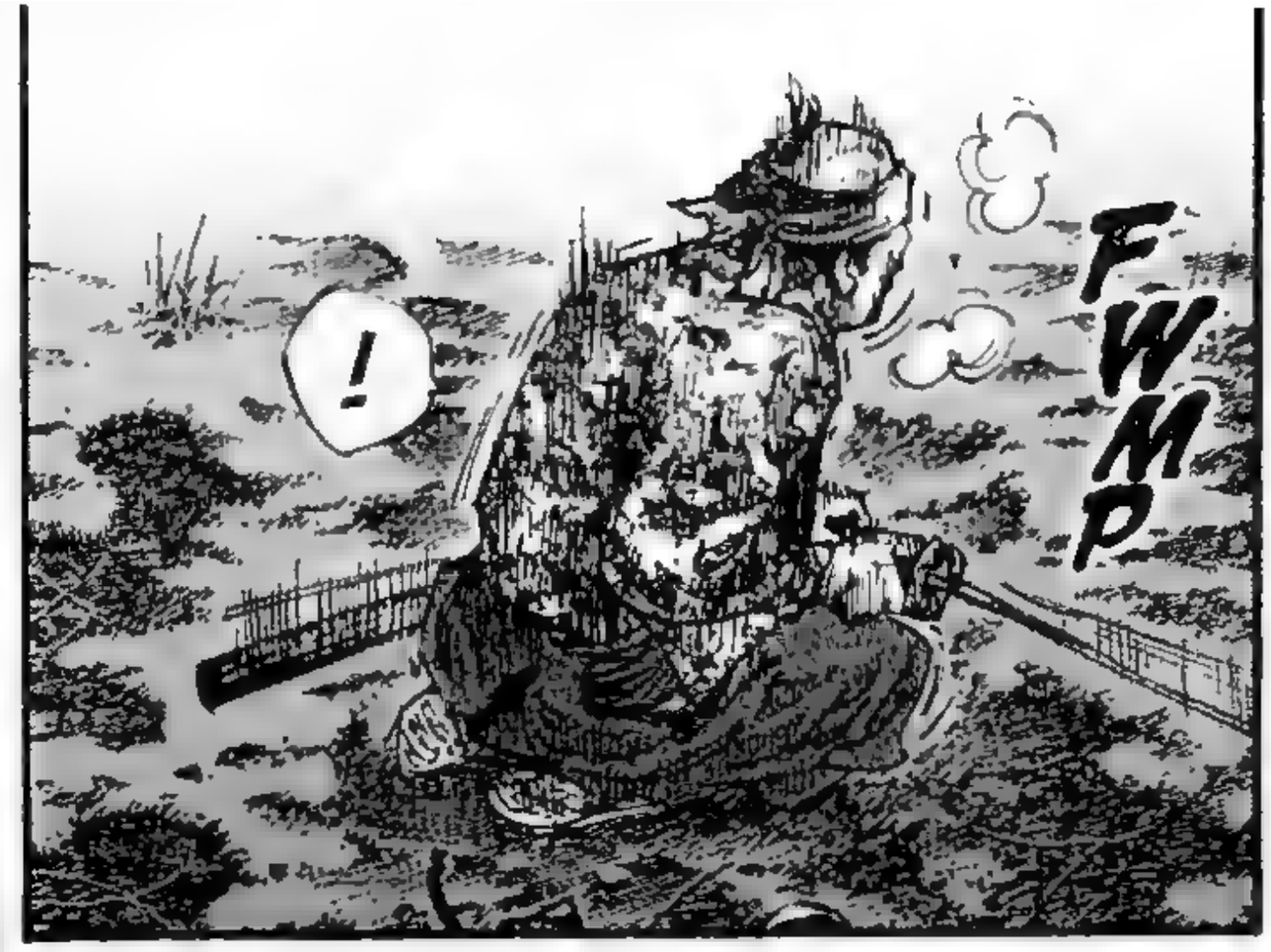
WHERE ARE WE...

!

MY NAME IS HORIKAWA YOSHIBE!

I AM ONE OF THE TEN SWORDSMEN OF THE YOSHIOKA!

HUF
HUF
...?


!
FWMP

HUF
HUF
GLG

HUF
HUF
...?

HUF
HUF
HUF
HIS BACK...

...

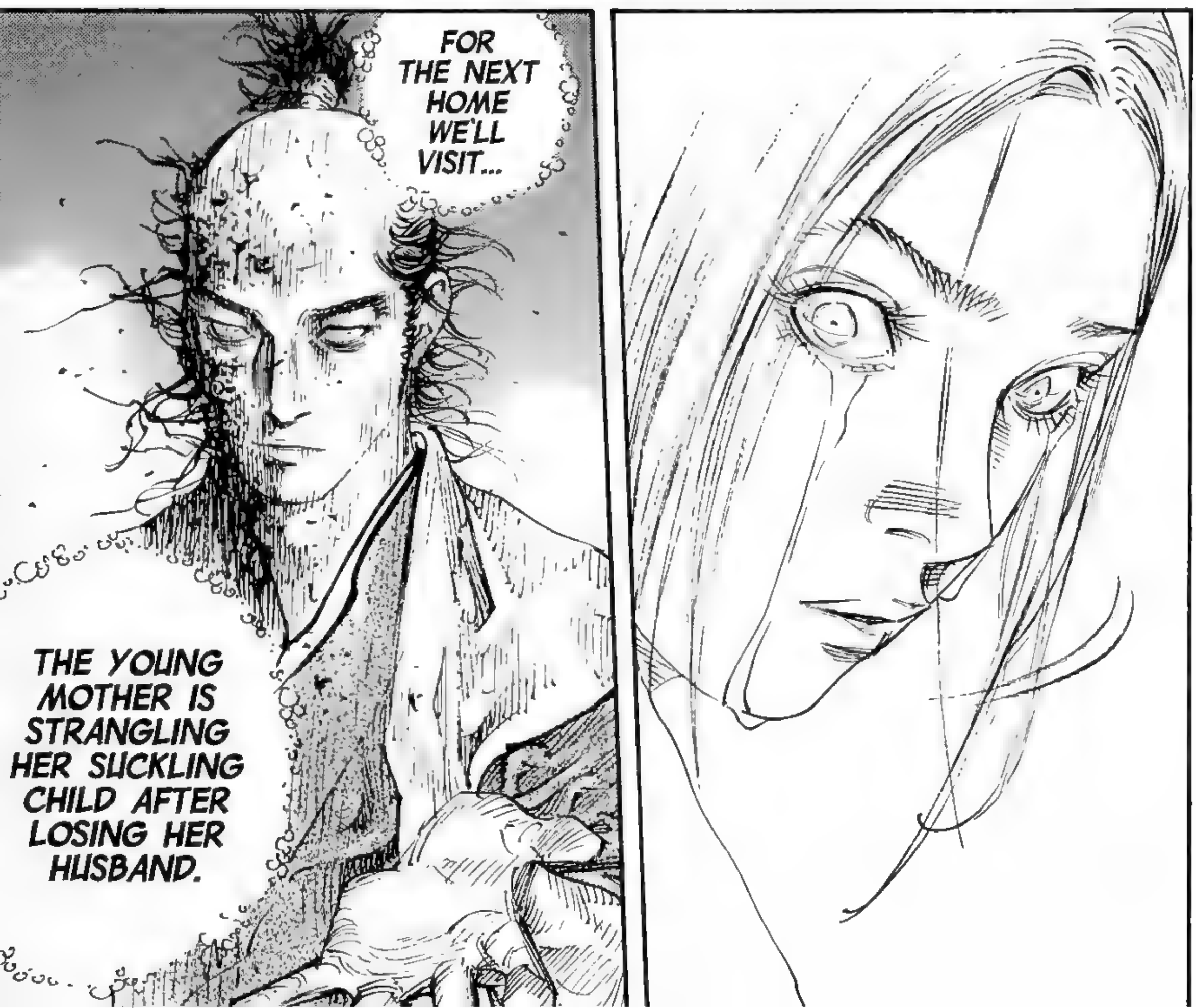
FLMP

HORIKAWA LIVED WITH HIS BEDRIDDEN MOTHER.

MOTHER ...

SHE COULDN'T POSSIBLY SURVIVE ON HER OWN...

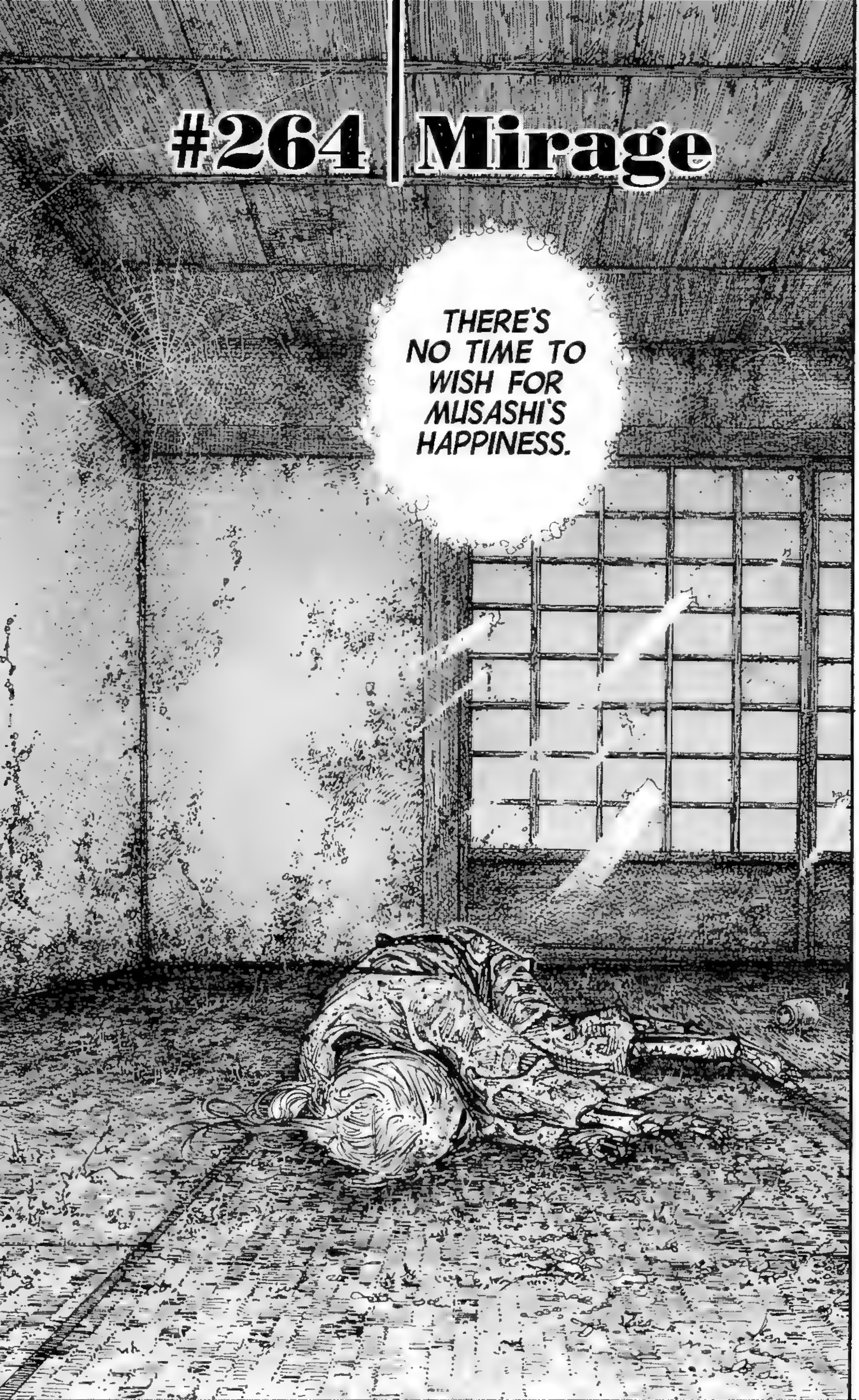
WITHOUT HIM, SHE LOST ALL HOPE.



COME! WE MUST HURRY. THERE ARE 70 PLACES FOR US TO VISIT.

THERE'S NO TIME TO WISH FOR MUSASHI'S HAPPINESS.

SILENCE


#264 Mirage
THERE'S NO TIME TO WISH FOR MUSASHI'S HAPPINESS.

...

...ONE OF THE YOSHI-OKA?
ARE YOU...

ALL WILLING TO PUT THEIR LIVES ON THE LINE, AND ALL THOSE LIVES WERE TAKEN AWAY...
UNFOR-GIVABLE...
SEVENTY MEN...

WHY ME?
HUF
HUF
HUF

ACK!

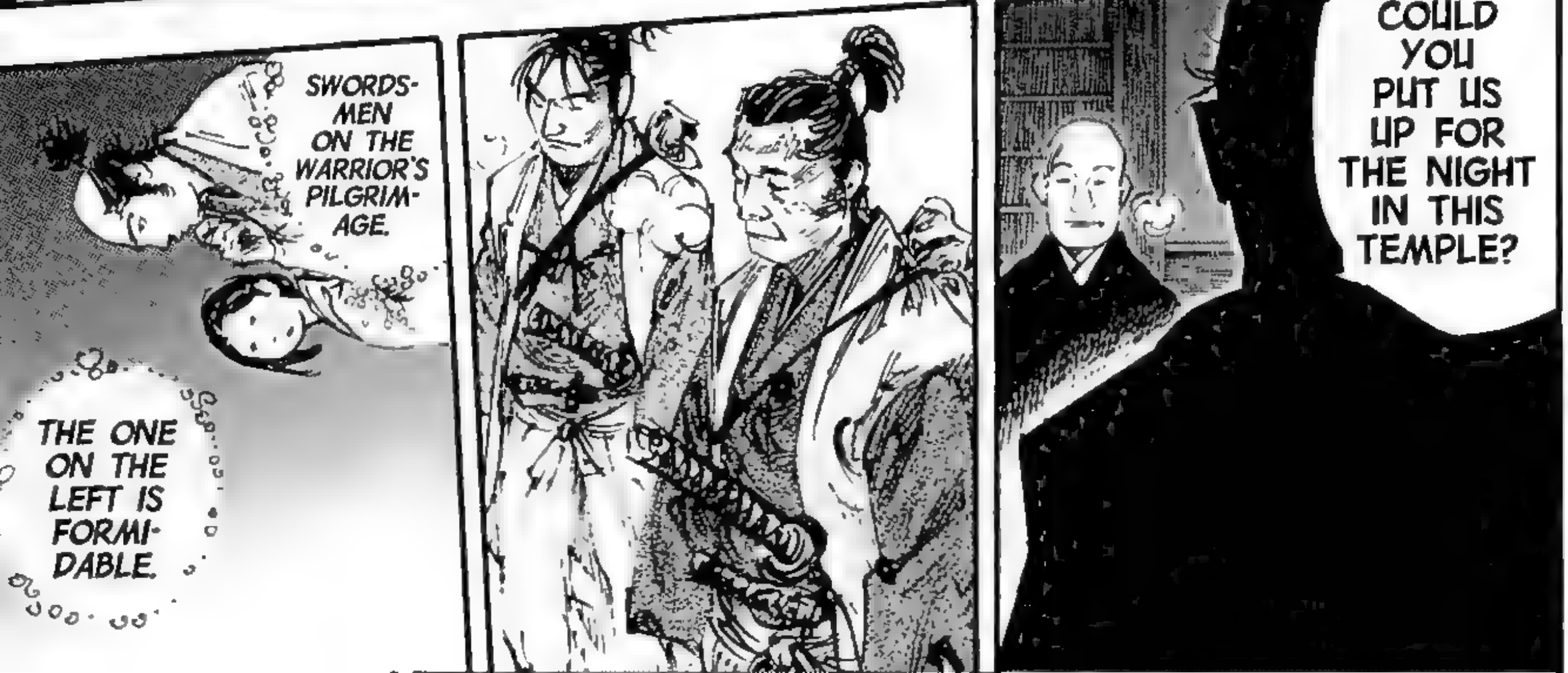
FWM
FWM
DESPIC-ABLE...

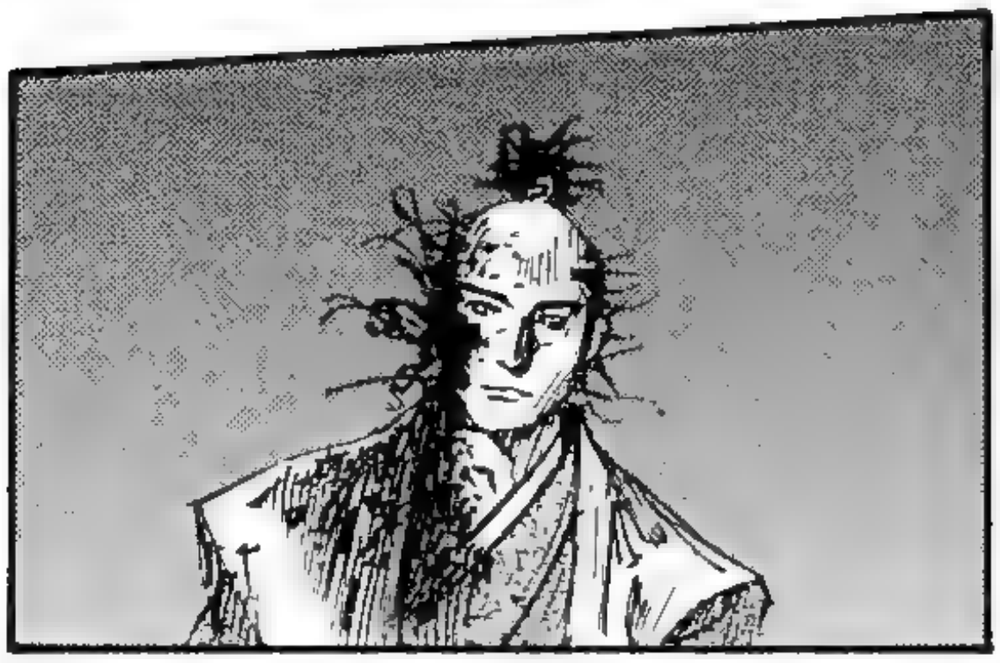
WHAT DO YOU WANT ME TO DO?

FUSSH
...

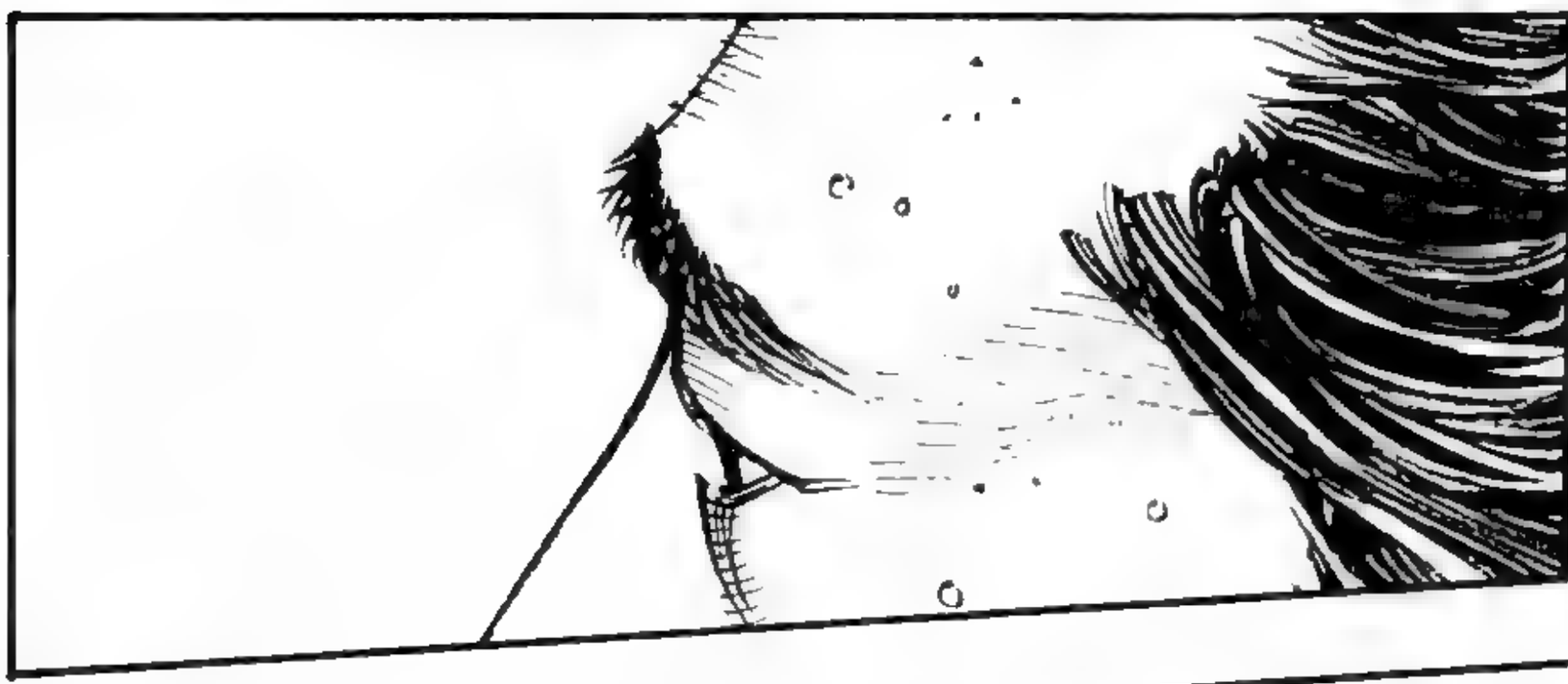
THAT'S HARSH! YOU DON'T CARE IF I KILL HIM?
...WHY DON'T YOU GO PUT A CURSE ON HIM AND KILL HIM.
IF YOU HATE TAKEZŌ SO MUCH...

GOOD EVENING.
WE ARE WEARY TRAVELERS.
BUT...
...WHETHER I DO IT OR NOT, HE'LL BE DEAD BY MORNING.
LOOK.


SWORDS-MEN ON THE WARRIOR'S PILGRIM-AGE.
THE ONE ON THE LEFT IS FORMI-DABLE.
COULD YOU PUT US UP FOR THE NIGHT IN THIS TEMPLE?



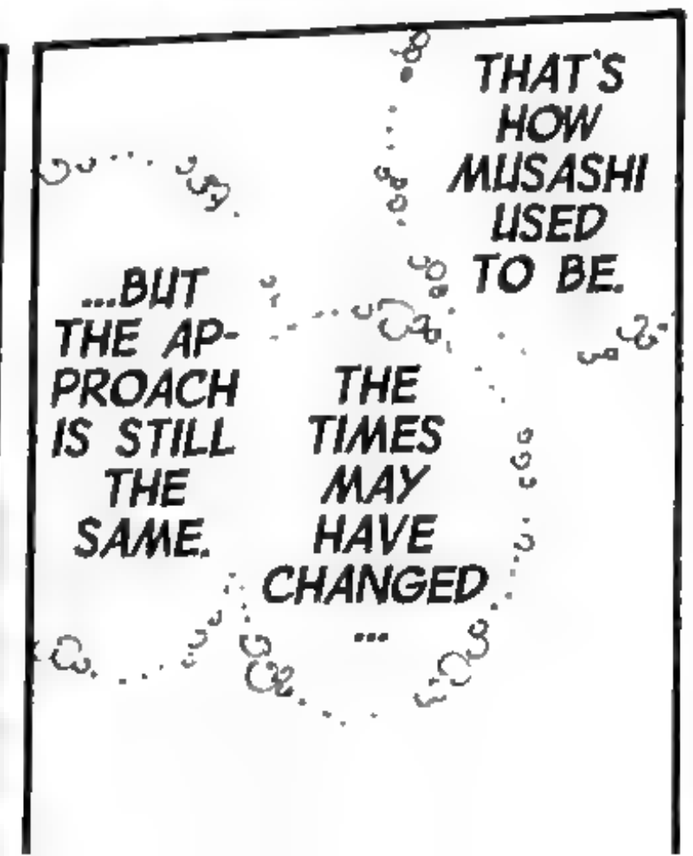
WE ARE TRYING TO FIND HIM.
WE WERE TOLD MIYAMOTO MUSASHI IS STAYING IN THE VICINITY.



THWAK

WE ARE OLD FRIENDS FROM BACK HOME.

...TO DEFEAT AN OPPONENT WITH A REPUTATION.
RESORT TO ANY MEANS...

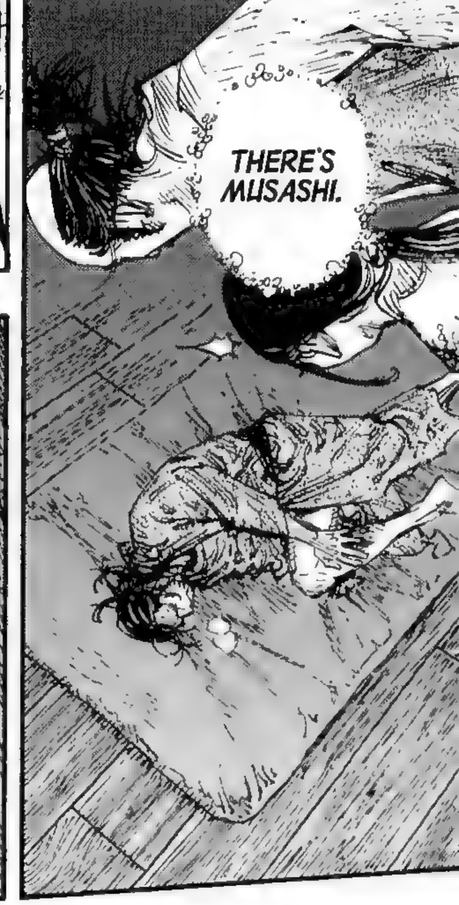

...BUT THE APPROACH IS STILL THE SAME.
THE TIMES MAY HAVE CHANGED...
THAT'S HOW MUSASHI USED TO BE.

HE'S LYING!

THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO...

HE'S GOING TO DIE.

HE'S IN PAIN.


THERE'S MUSASHI.

...?!

HE'S BEEN LIKE THIS...
...EVER SINCE WE WERE CHILDREN.

HE CAN'T ESCAPE.

HE'S NEVER BEEN AFRAID TO DIE.
I'VE WATCHED OVER HIM FOR SO LONG.
SO...
WHAT'S THE USE IN GETTING WORKED UP NOW?

MUSASHI MEANS SO MUCH TO--

ARE YOU SURE?

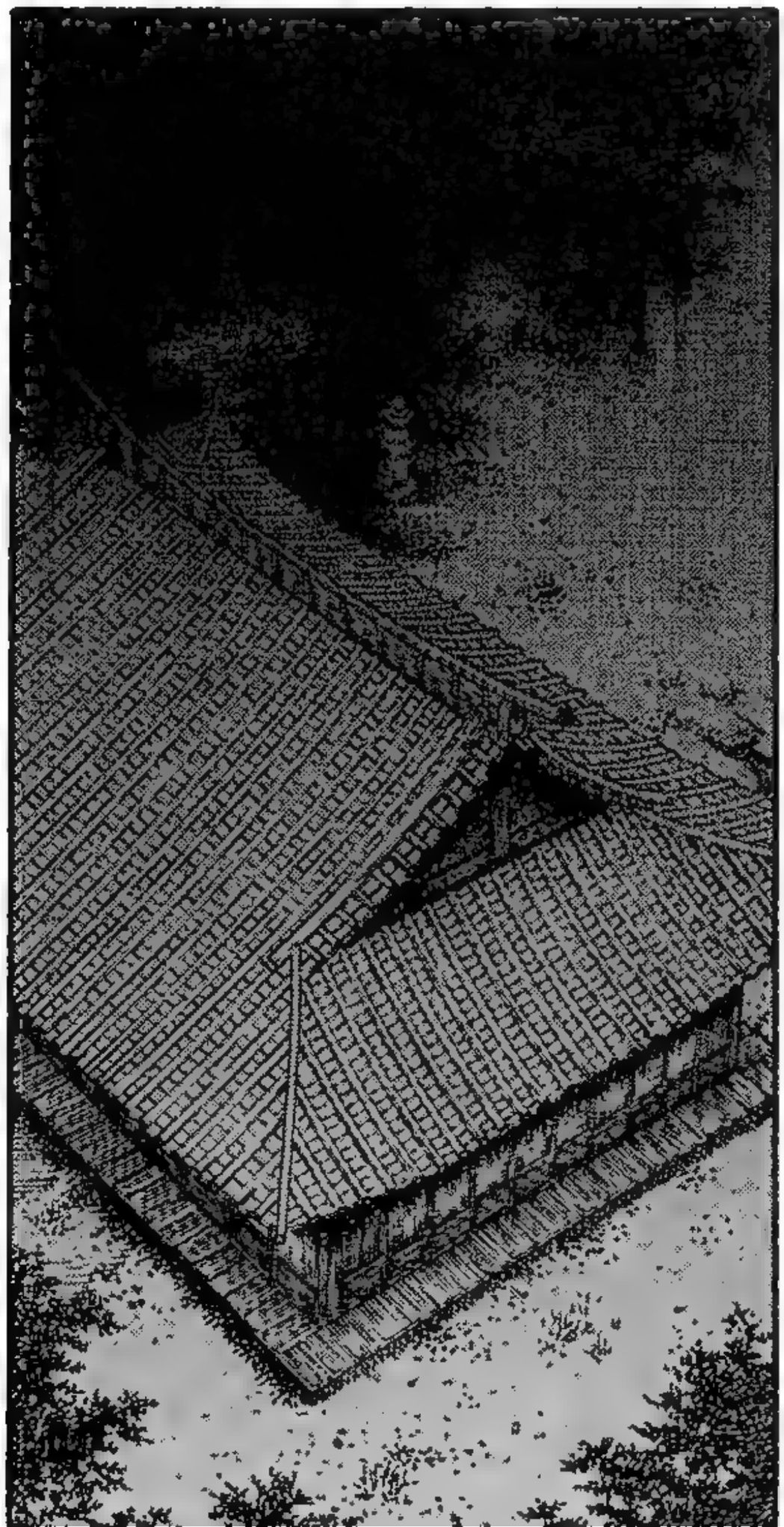
HEY! STOP READING MY MIND.

IT'S FINE.

...

...!!

WHAT D

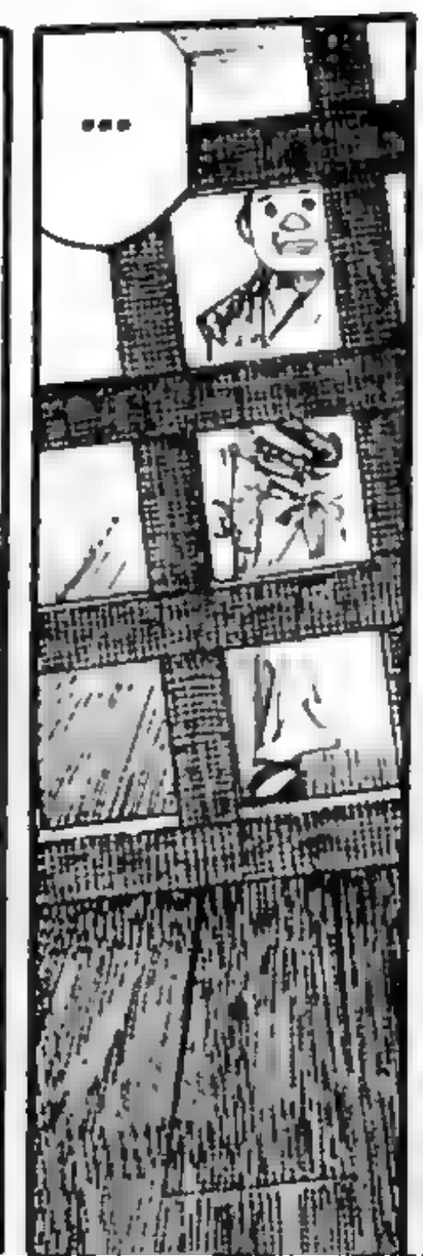


OTSU...
AND FORGIVE ME FOR READING YOUR MIND.
DO THOSE WHO ARE LEFT BEHIND HAVE TO GIVE UP SO EASILY?

НУАН!

TUNK
FWUM

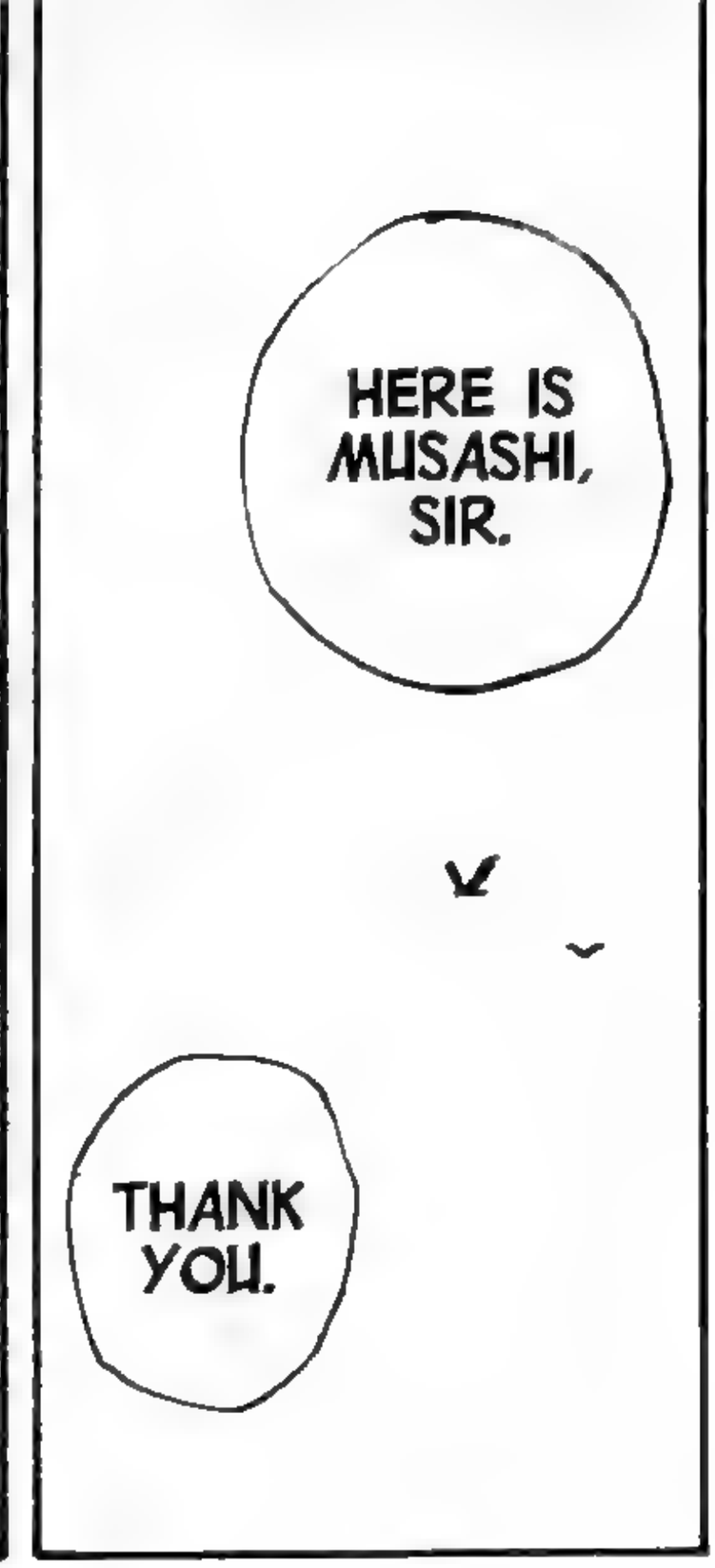
THE SHOSHIDAI ITAKURA KATSUSHIGE WOULD LIKE A WORD WITH YOU.


...

...
DAMN.
NO GOOD.

HERE YOU ARE.

.....
HOW IS YOUR LEG DOING?
IT MUST PAIN YOU TO SIT FORMALLY. PLEASE BE AT EASE.


HERE IS MUSASHI, SIR.
THANK YOU.

I WOULD LIKE TO ASK YOU SOMETHING.
MUSASHI.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE INVINCIBLE?

IT'S ONLY A WORD.

LIKE A MIRAGE...

...IT VANISHED AS SOON AS I APPROACHED IT.

HM?

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

AND IF HE'S NOT SENTENCED TO DEATH.

THEN THAT'S ALL THE MORE REASON...

WHAT'RE YOU SAYING?!

...?!

?!

GRNGH

ALLOW ME TO CUT HIM DOWN.

!!

I'M FROM THE YOSHI-OKA.

WHAT?!

HEY!

A-ARE YOU CRAZY?!

STOP...

DON'T DO THIS, ŌTAGURO.
URR...
COME OUT, MUSASHI!
I AM ONE OF THE TEN SWORDSMEN OF THE YOSHIOKA, ŌTAGURO HYŌSUKE!
MUSASHI !!

IN OTHER WORDS, UNTIL RECENTLY IT WAS SO FAR OUT OF REACH...
...I COULDN'T SEE IT FOR WHAT IT WAS.

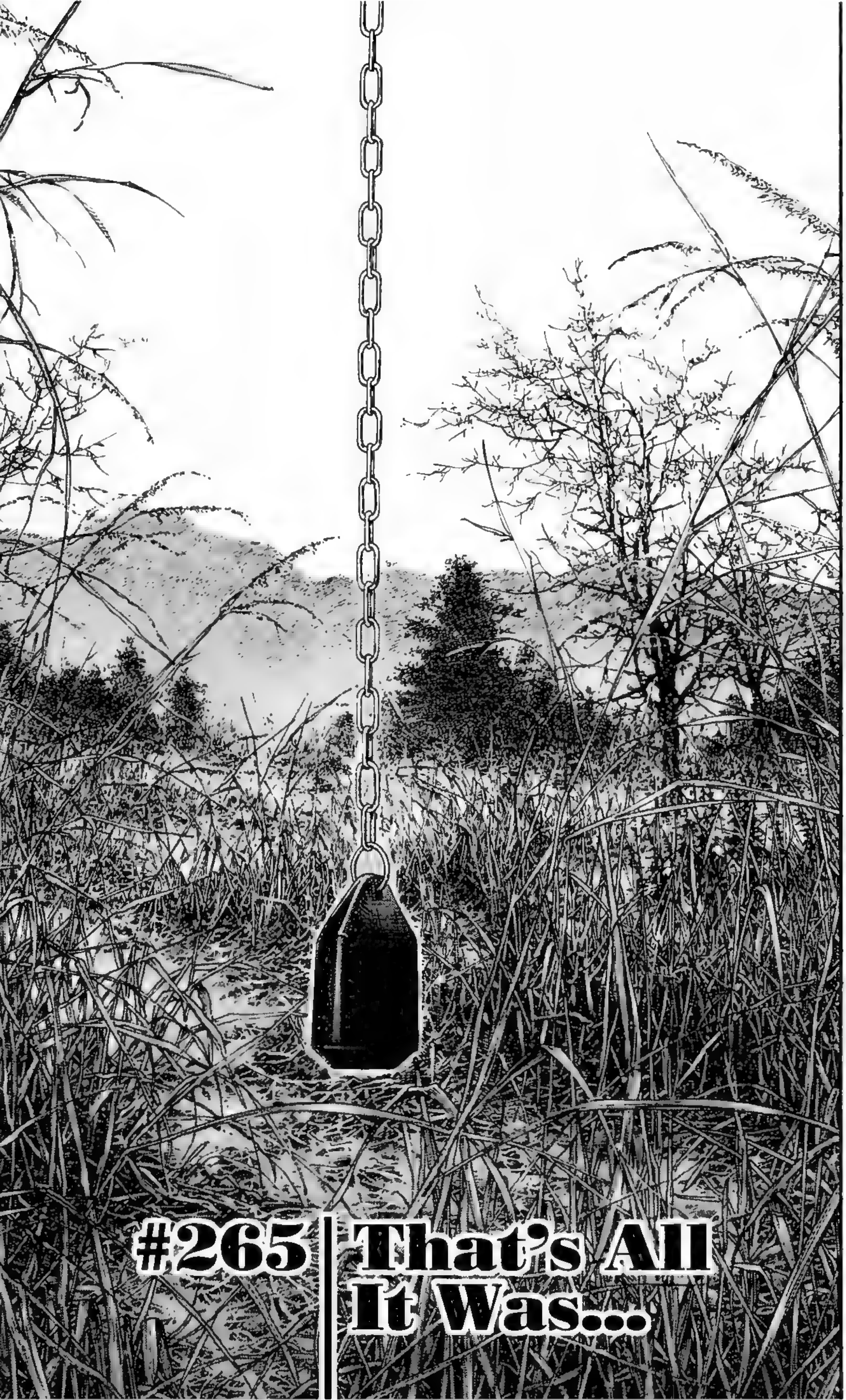
...THAT VANISHES AS YOU APPROACH IT.
A MIRAGE...

IT DOESN'T EXIST?
ARE YOU SAYING...
A MIRAGE...

IT'S OVER.

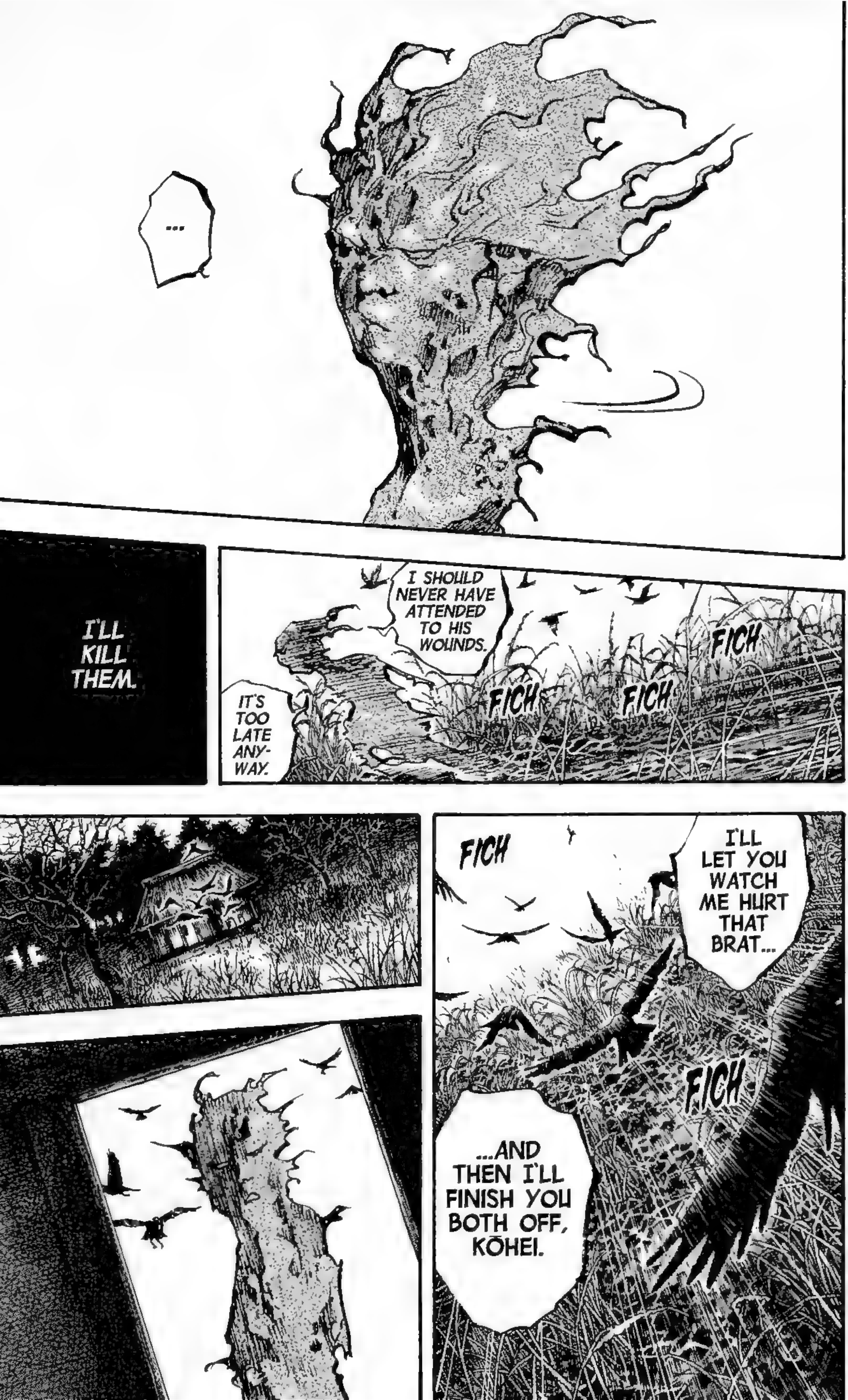
...LONG AGO, BACK THEN...
MAYBE I ALREADY REALIZED IT WAS A MIRAGE...

SLOGG
NO GOOD AT ALL.

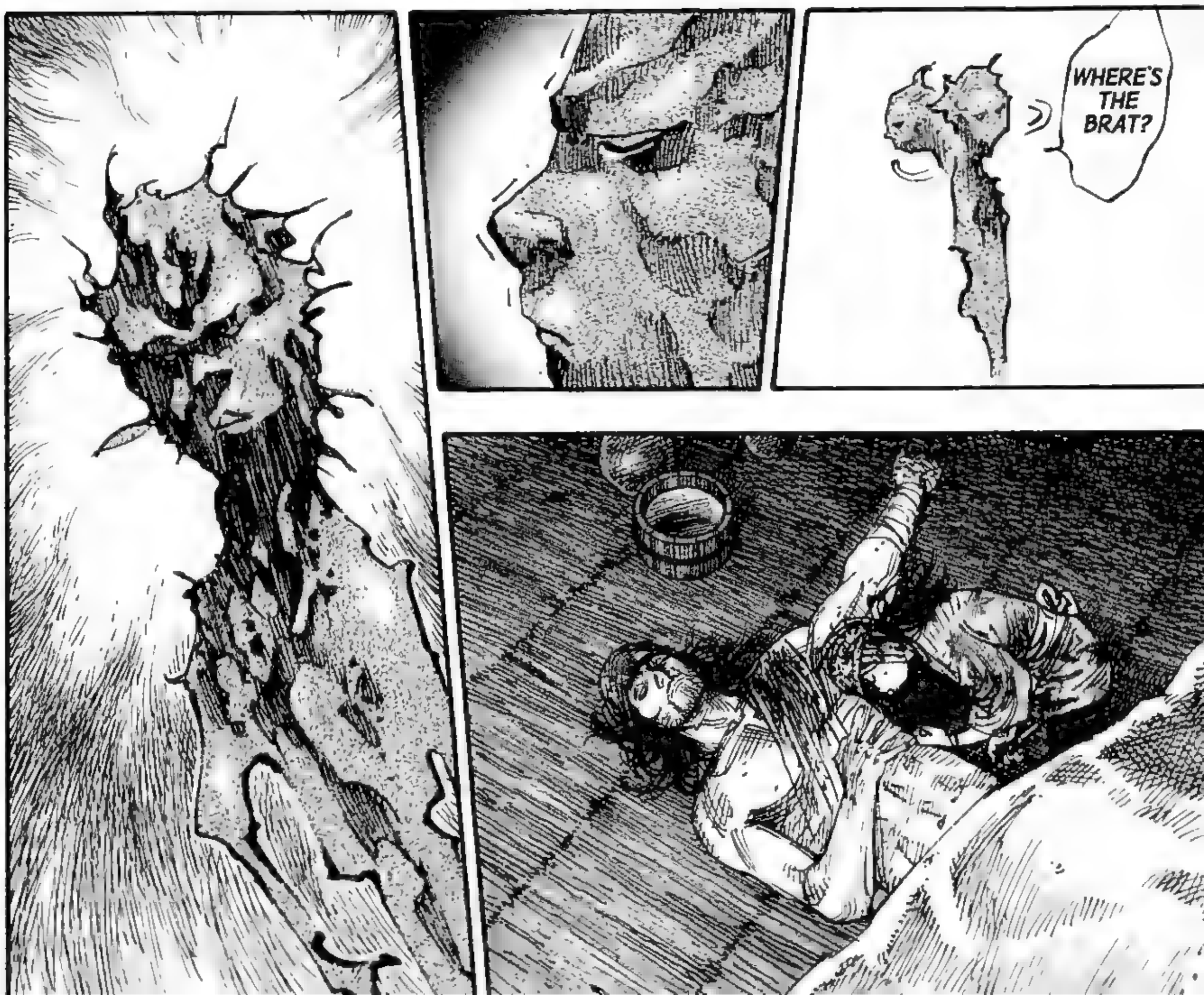

#265
That's All It Was...

I'M THROUGH WITH IT...

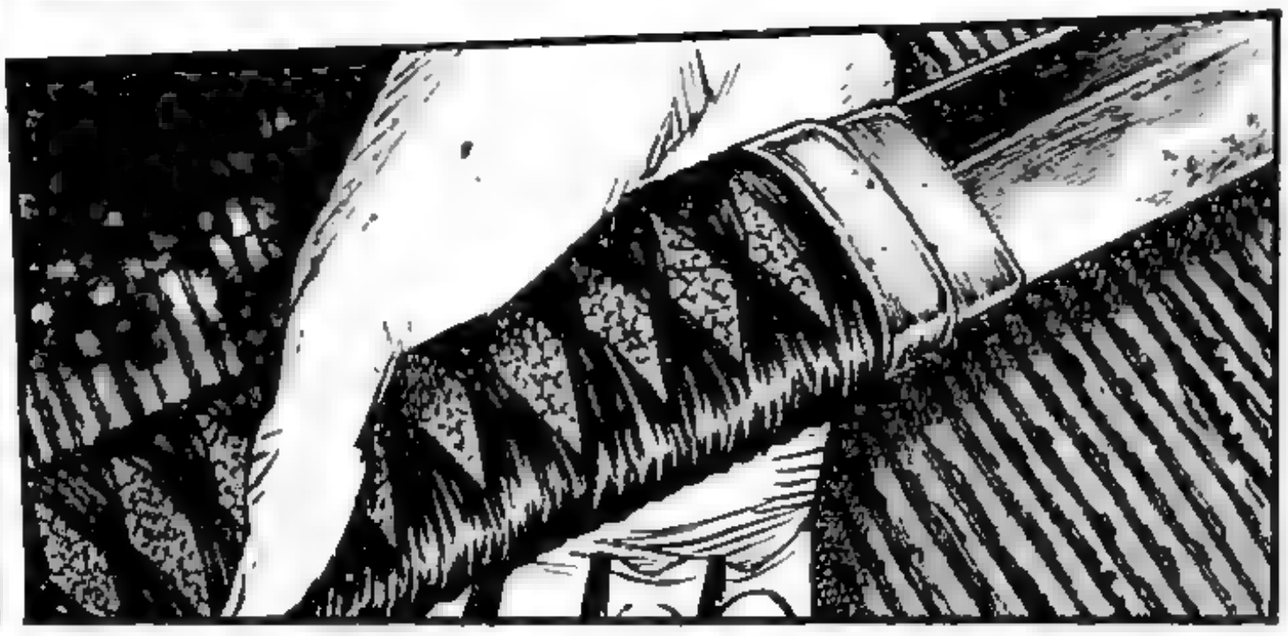
...THIS SPIRAL OF DEATH AND KILLING!


...
I'LL KILL THEM.
I SHOULD NEVER HAVE ATTENDED TO HIS WOUNDS.
IT'S TOO LATE ANY-WAY.
FICH
FICH
FICH
FICH
FICH
I'LL LET YOU WATCH ME HURT THAT BRAT...
...AND THEN I'LL FINISH YOU BOTH OFF, KŌHEI.

SO YOU DIDN'T MAKE IT AFTER ALL.

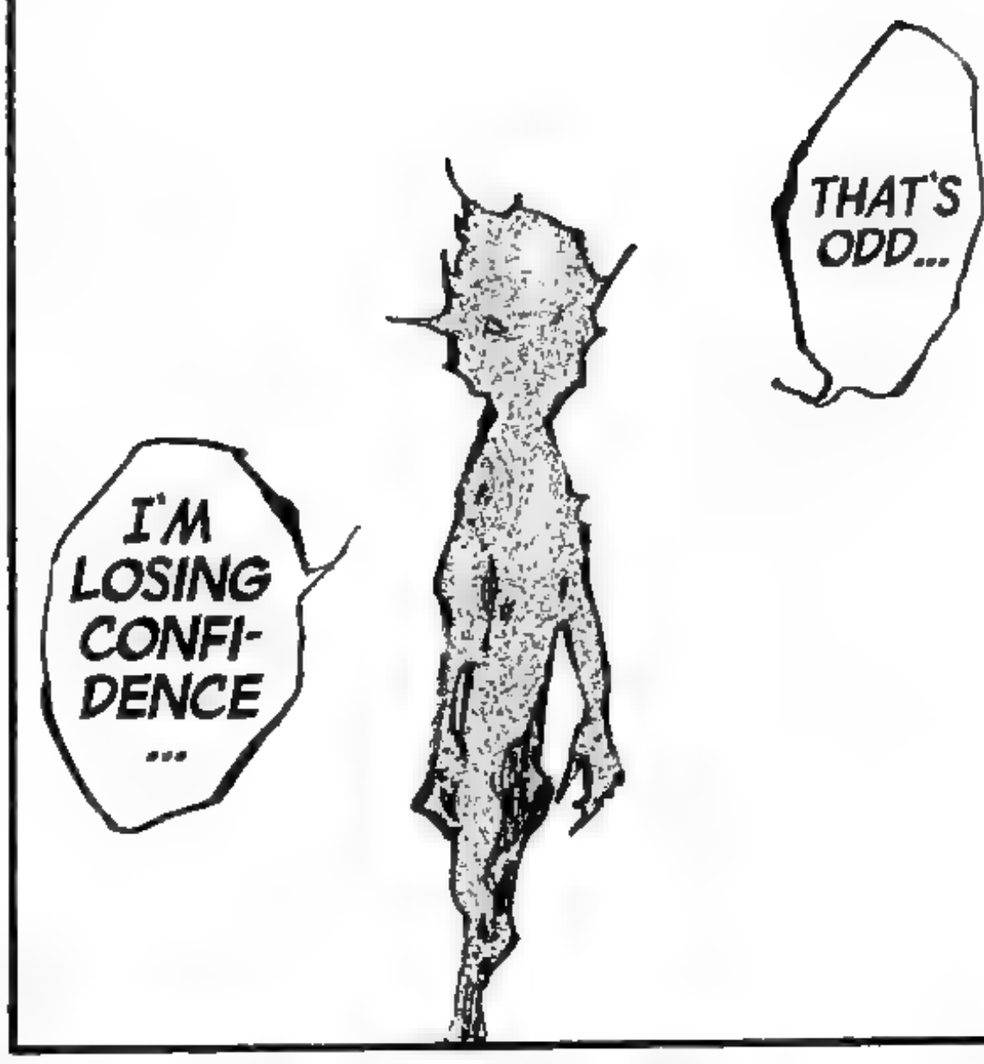


THAT MAY HAVE BEEN WHEN I REALIZED...

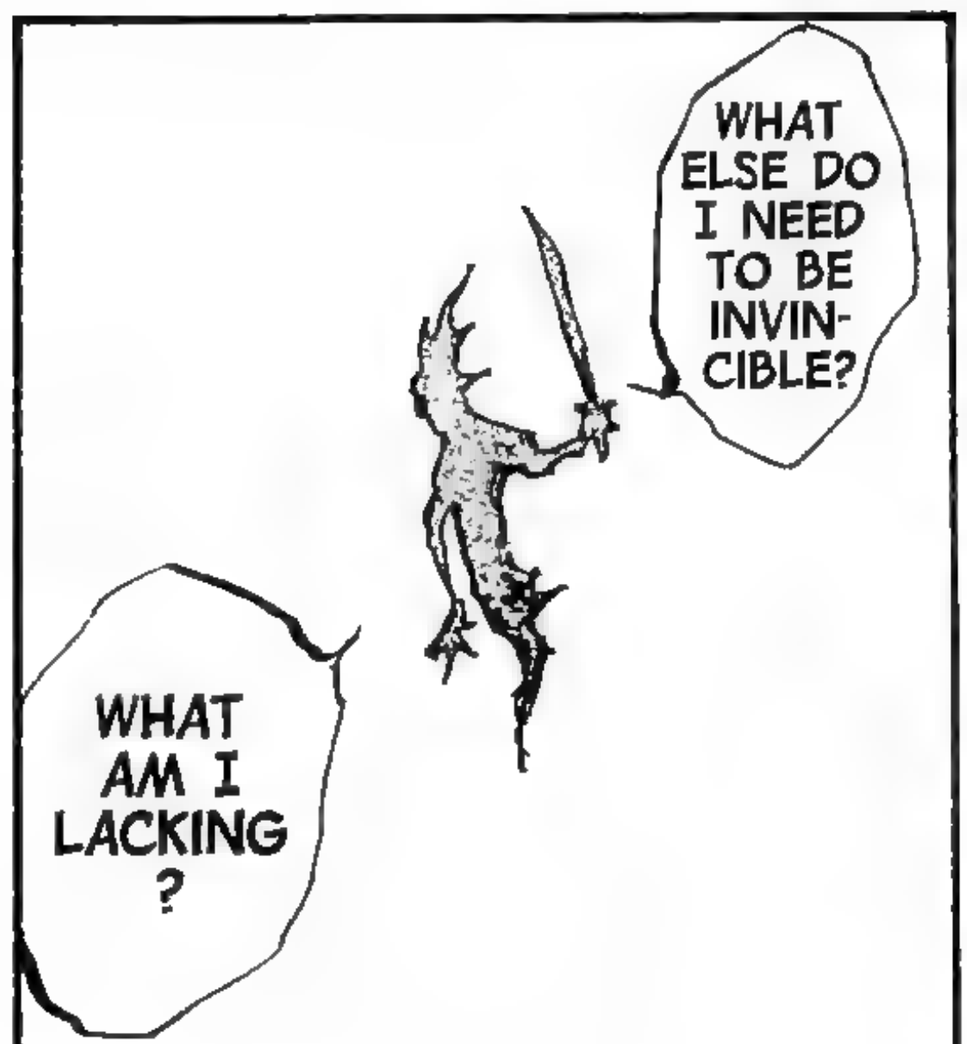


THE MAN WHO LOST DIED A BOLD DEATH.
WHILE I, WHO HAD SUPPOSEDLY WON, HAD TO SNEAK OFF AND RUN AWAY.
?
HUF
HUF
FWEEEE

...
THIS WILL INTERFERE WITH THE WAY.


I'M LOSING CONFI-DENCE ...
THAT'S ODD...

...THE MORE I FELT LIKE MY DREAM WAS SLIPPING AWAY.
I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO...
THE MORE I WON...


WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO BE INVIN-CIBLE?
WHAT AM I LACKING ?

I JUST LOOKED THE OTHER WAY.

FICH

I NEED THE EXPERIENCE TO KILL AND KILL-- AS MANY AS I CAN.

I DEFEATED YOSHIOKA SEIJŪRŌ.

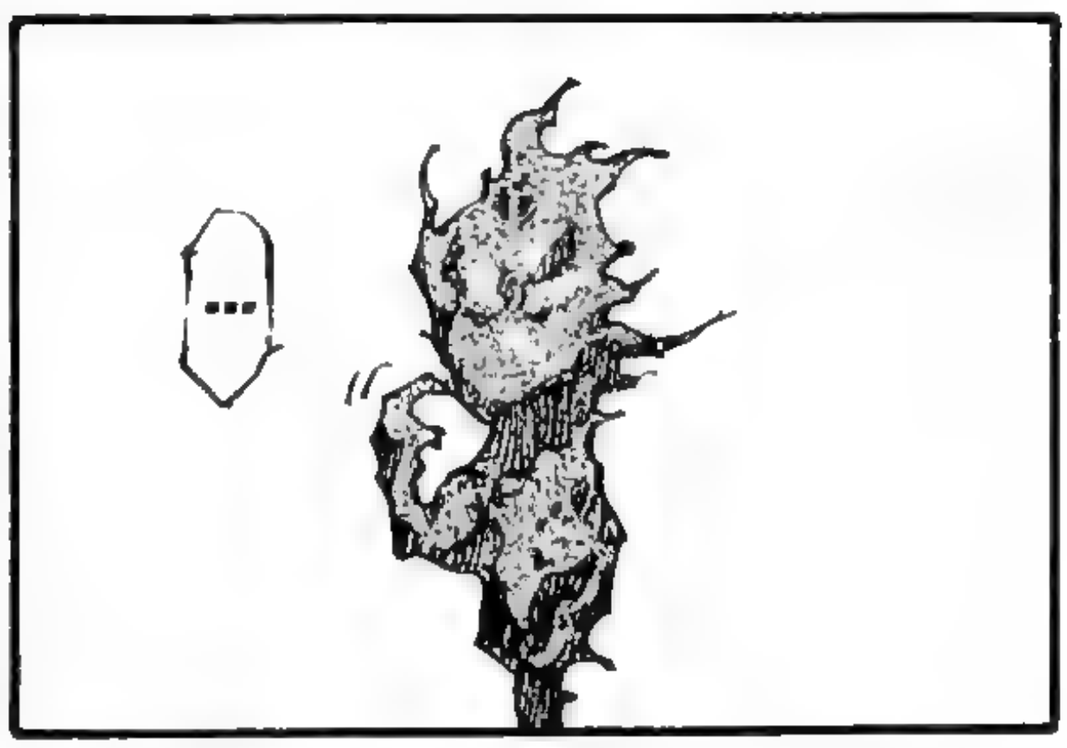
...

I THOUGHT I'D BE HAPPY.

GO DOWN ALREADY.

FICH

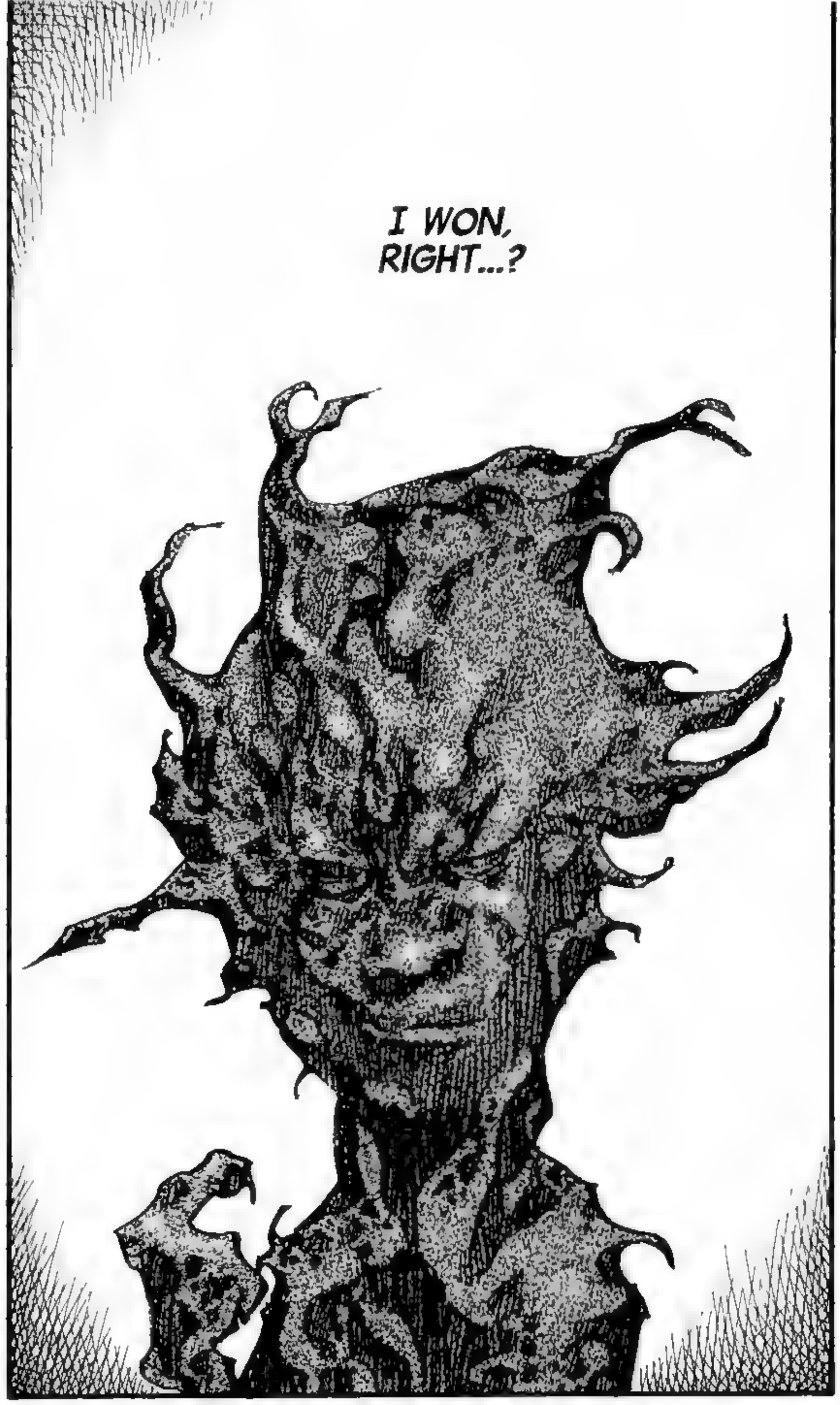
I HAVE NO REGRETS.
I AM TAGAYA HIKOZŌ, ONE OF THE TEN SWORDS-MEN OF YOSHI-OKA...


...

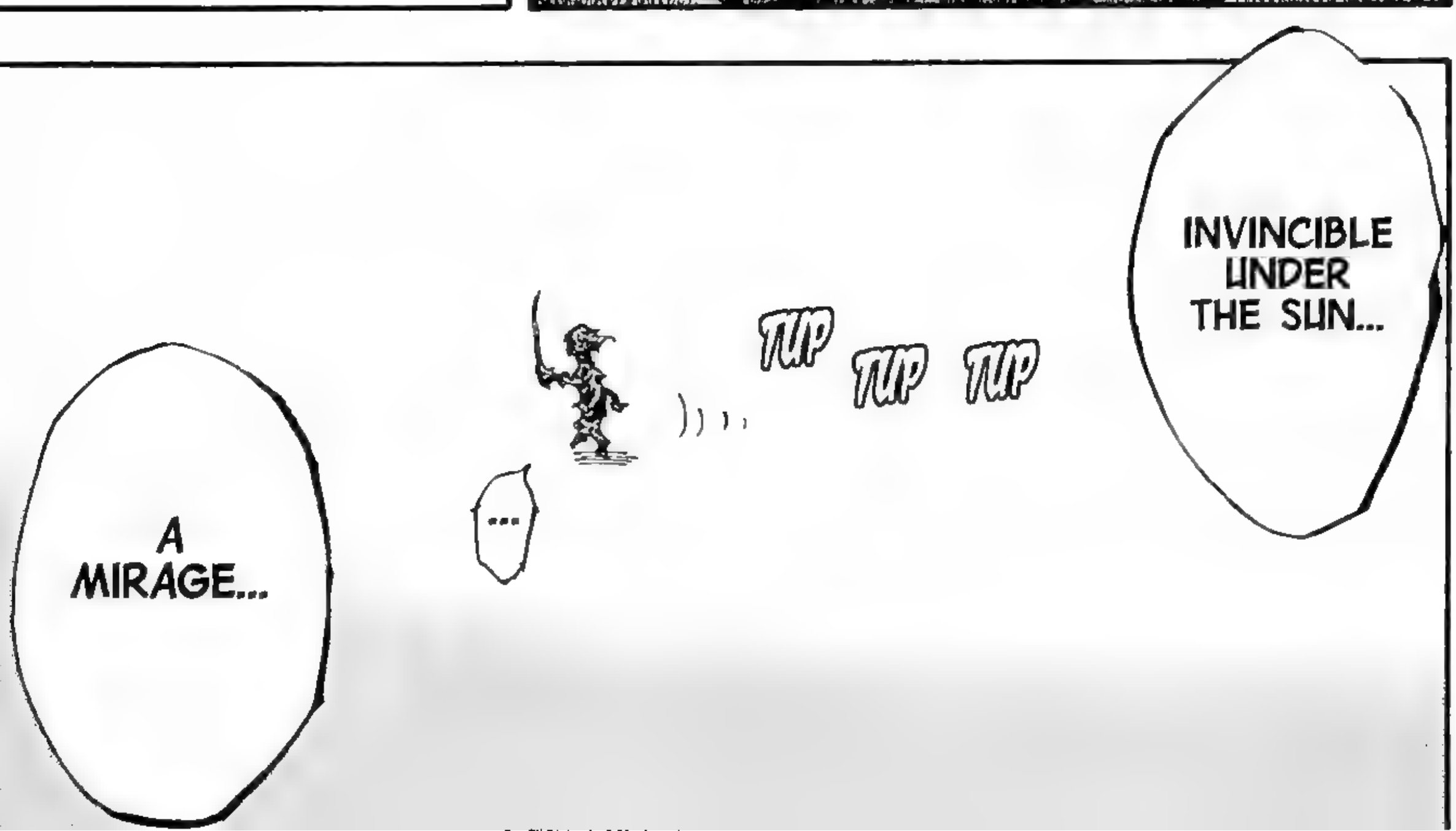
WE COULD HAVE BEEN RIVALS ON GOOD TERMS.
MUSASHI!

HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF
HUF

YAHH!
HAH!

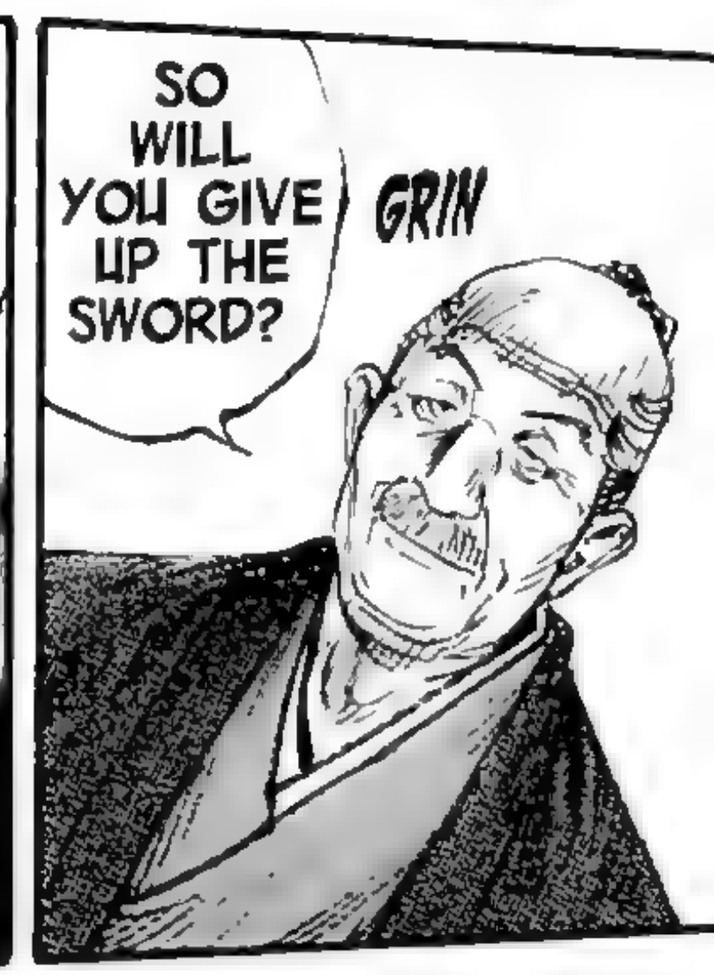

I WON, RIGHT...?

...


INVINCIBLE UNDER THE SUN...
TUP TUP TUP
...
A MIRAGE...

IT TOOK ME 22 YEARS TO REALIZE THAT.
THAT'S ALL IT WAS...

...



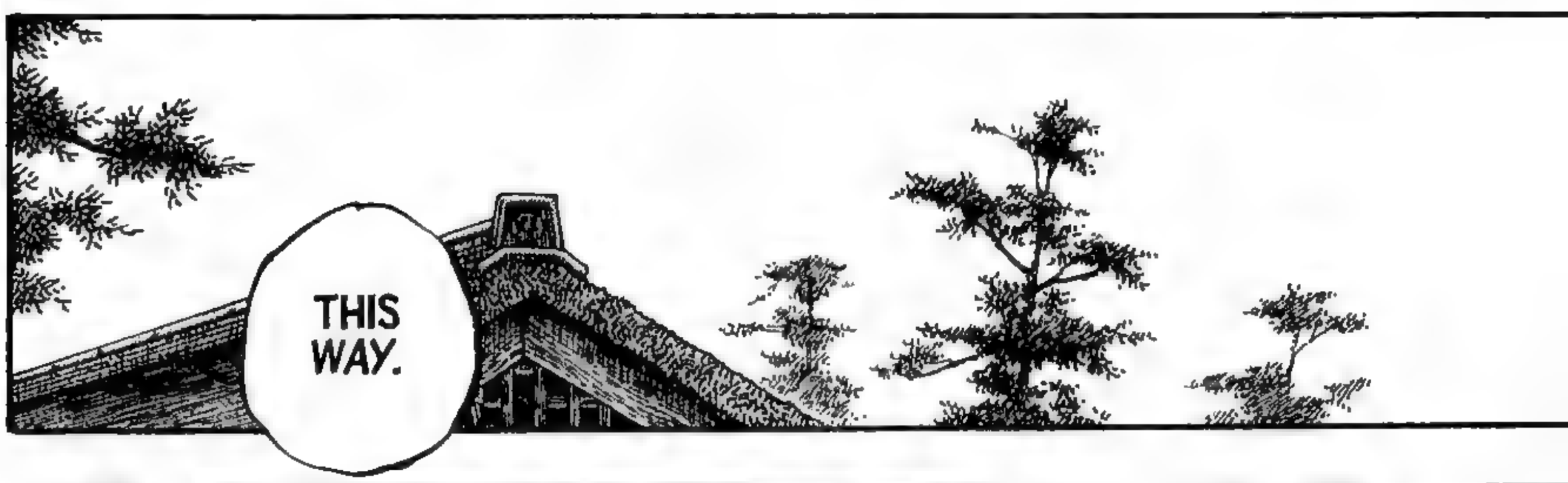

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN FIGHTING...

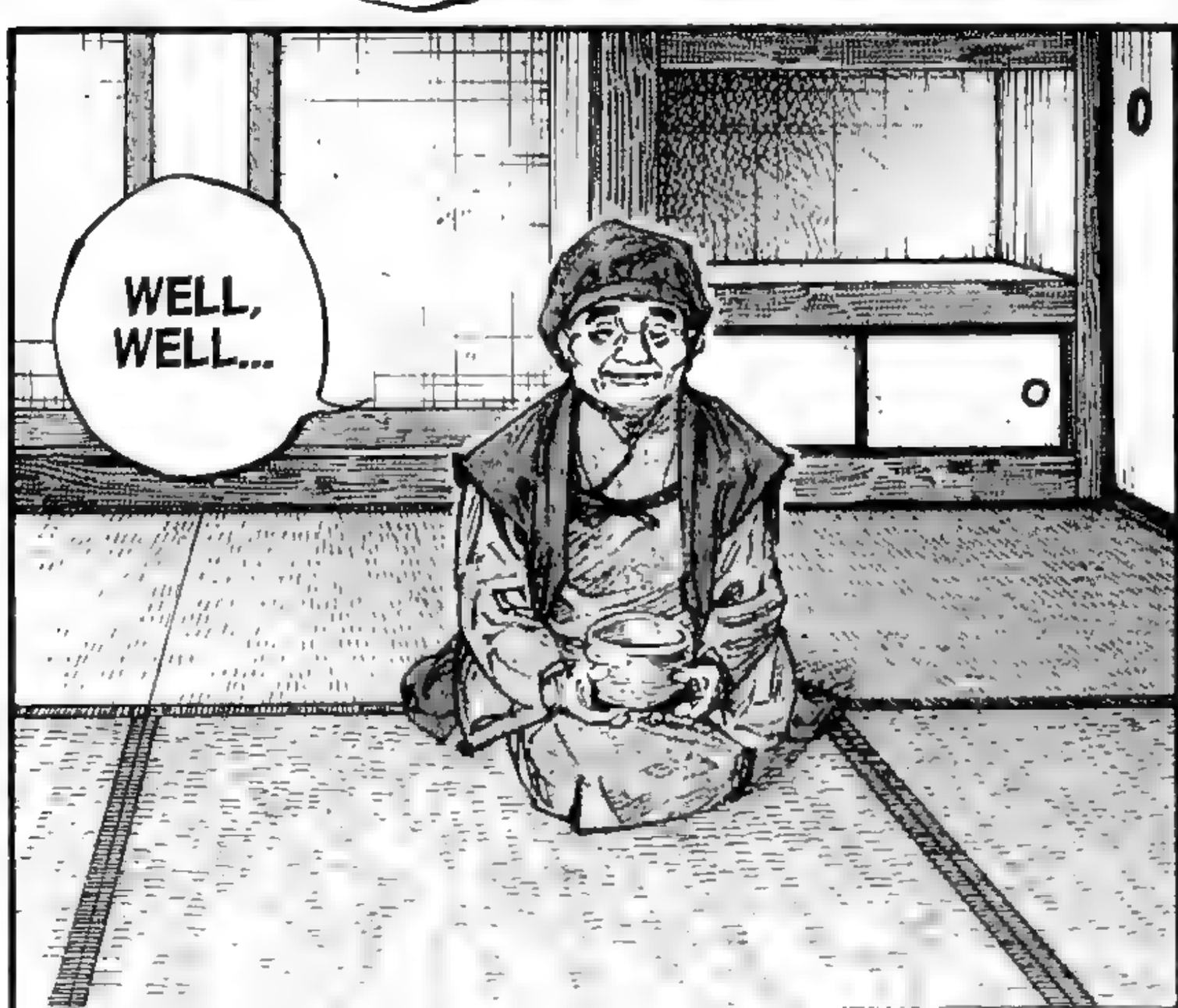
...FOR SO MUCH LONGER THAN YOU. FOR CENTURIES, EVEN MILLENNIA.

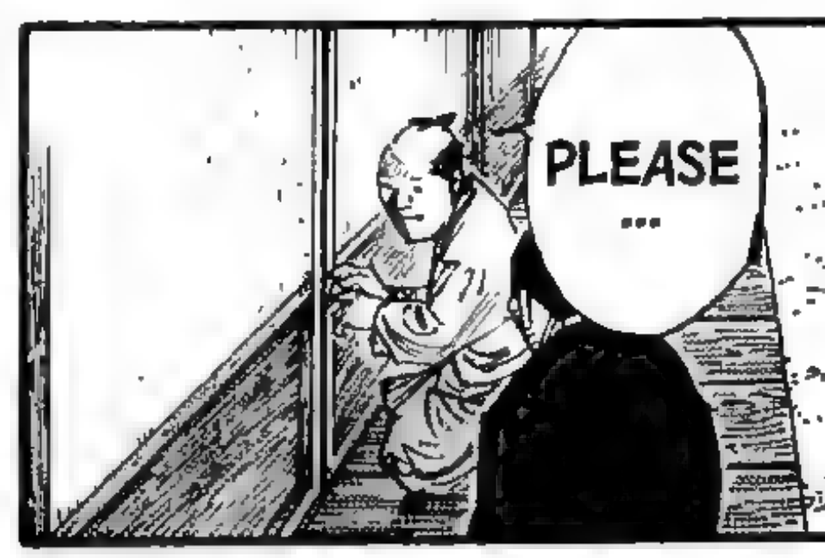
SIR...
HM... WHAT IS IT?
I'M SORRY TO INTERRUPT, SIR!
ŌTA-GURO?
I DON'T REMEMBER ALL THEIR NAMES.
I SEE.
MUSASHI, DO YOU KNOW A YOSHIOKA SWORDSMAN NAMED ŌTAGURO?
WHAT?
...AT THE SAME TIME.
WE SHALL MEET AGAIN TOMORROW ...
...MUSA-SHI.
I WANT TO CONTINUE THIS TALK...

WILL YOU GIVE UP THE SWORD ?

...


THIS WAY.


WELL, WELL...


PLEASE ...

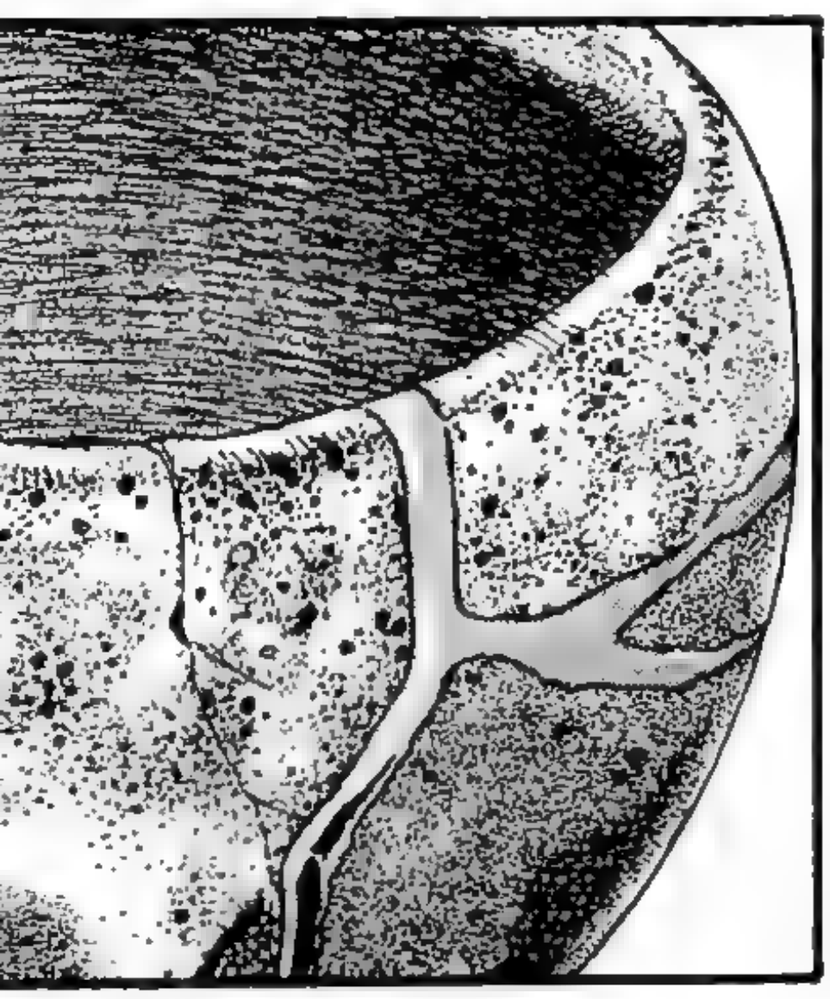
MUSASHI HAS TOLD ME SO MUCH ABOUT YOU.

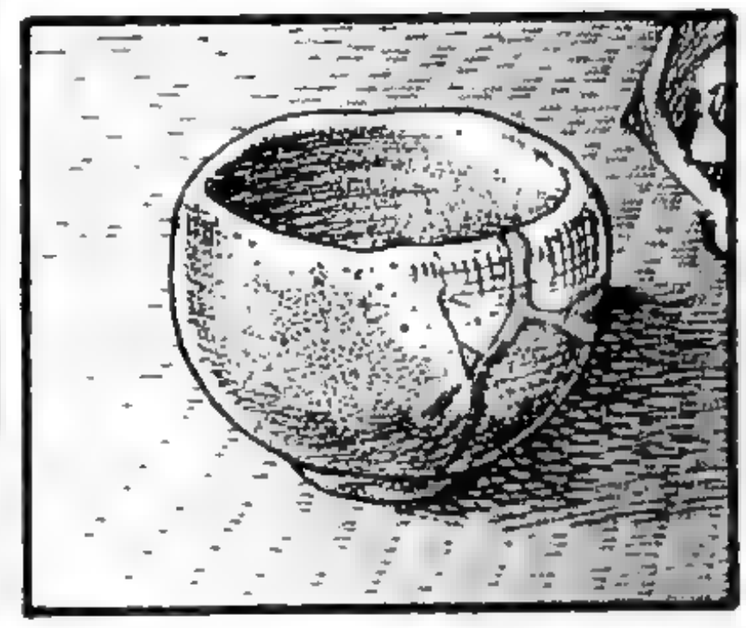
WELCOME, TAKUAN.

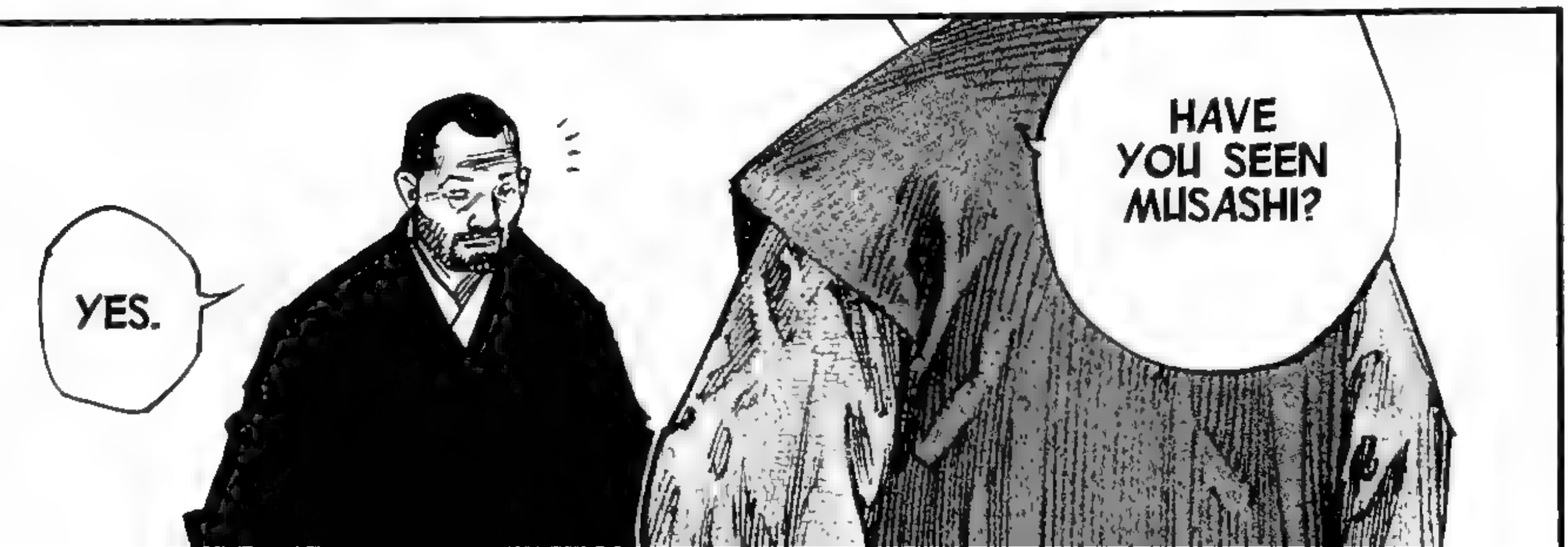
WEL-COME.

I'M SORRY FOR COMING HERE UNINVITED, SIR KŌETSU.

WELL, I HOPE IT WASN'T ALL BAD.







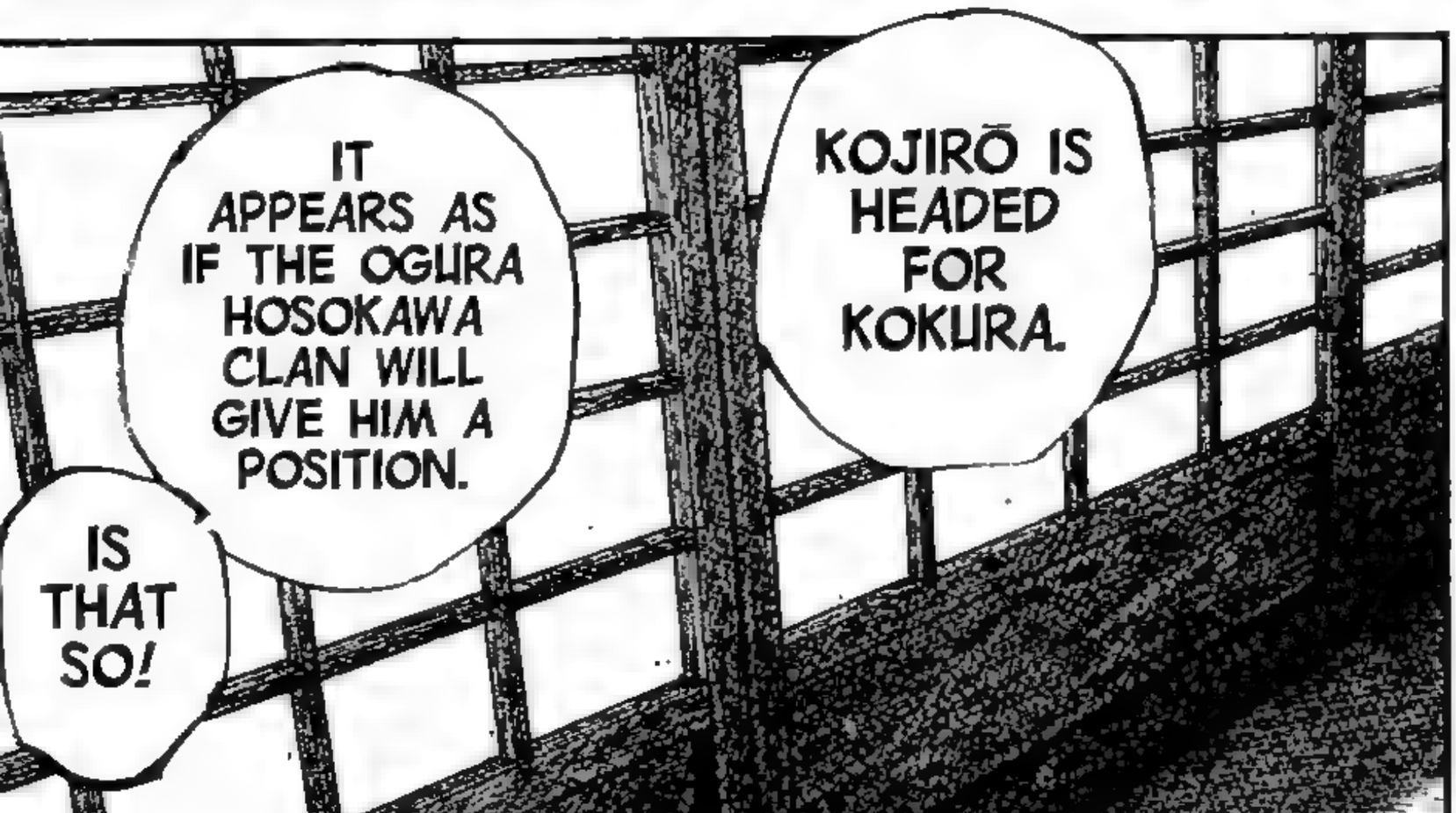
LATELY HE'S ALL I THINK ABOUT...
I'M CON-CERNED...
...ABOUT HIS FUTURE.

THAT'S WHEN I THOUGHT OF KOJIRŌ.

HE WAS ONLY ABOUT SO HIGH.
I ACTUALLY MET HIM BEFORE I EVEN KNEW MUSASHI...
HE MUST'VE BEEN ABOUT 3 YEARS OLD.

YOU KNOW KOJIRŌ TOO.
SO THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE...

ALREADY WIELDING A SWORD!



IT'S SO STRANGE.
I'VE BEEN PREOCCUPIED WITH KOJIRŌ'S FUTURE.

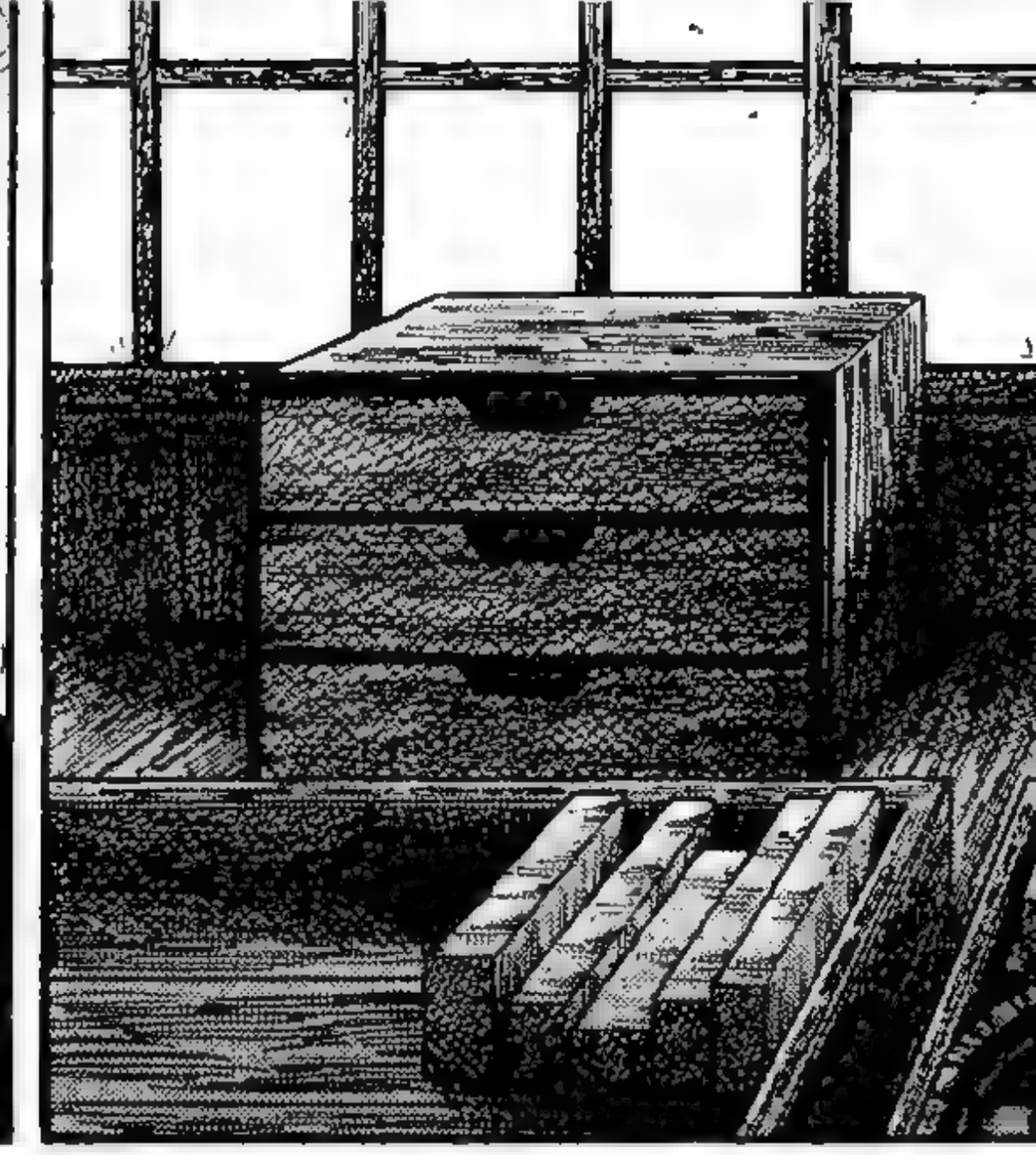
AND THAT'S WHEN I THOUGHT OF MUSASHI.

OH...
YOU'VE GOTTEN SO BIG.

# #266 Two Pieces of a Whole

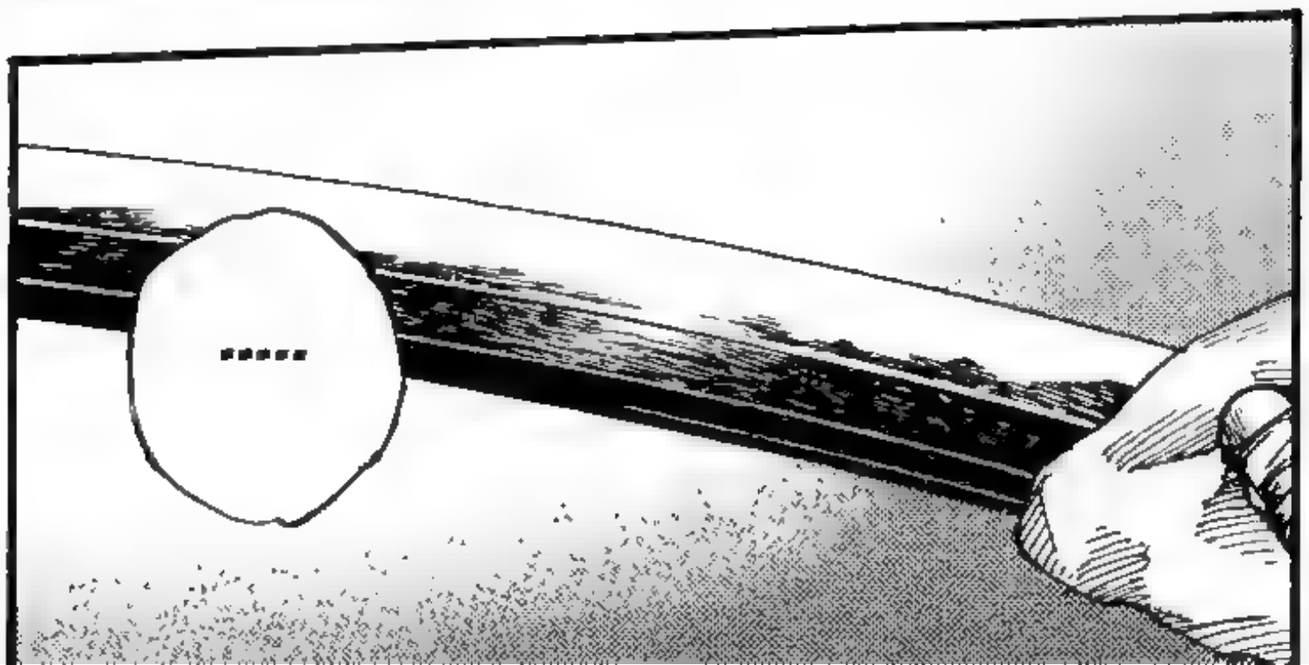
NOT AT ALL...
MUSASHI USED TO COME HERE TOO.
I SEE.

THIS DOESN'T APPEAR TO BE A PLACE FOR VISITORS.
I'M SORRY ...



THEY BOTH EXIST ON THE FRINGE OF SOCIETY...
THOSE TWO...
MUSASHI AND KOJIRŌ...

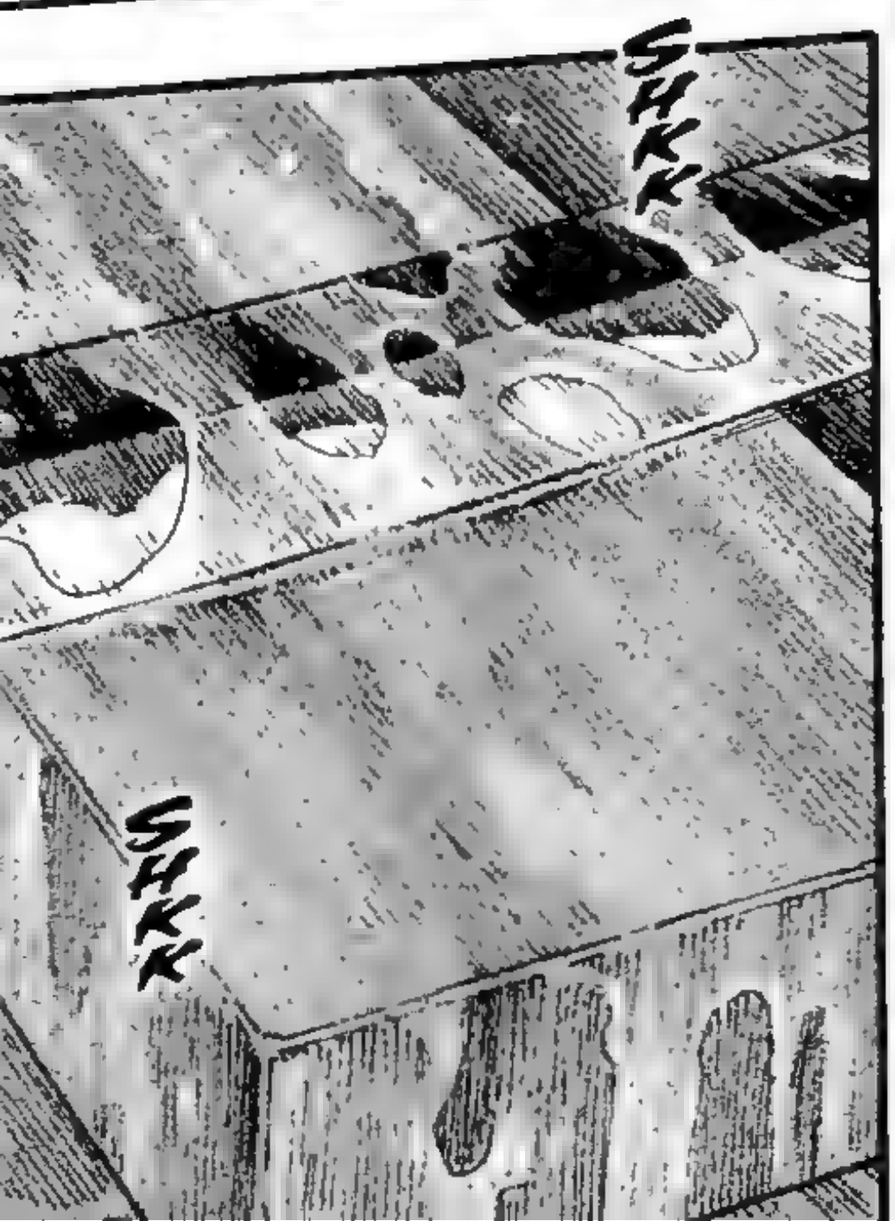
...OR PERHAPS...


.....

...ARE LIKE OPPOSING WINGS ON A BIRD...

IF YOU CONSIDERED THEM AS RAW UNCOVERED BLADES...

...THEN THEY SERVE AS EACH OTHER'S SHEATHS.



I CAN SEE THAT YOU ARE A GENTLE MAN, BUT IT MAKES ME ASK MYSELF...
THE SWORD WHOSE PURPOSE IS TO CUT PEOPLE DOWN...

AS I OBSERVE AN ARTIST SUCH AS YOURSELF USING HIS HANDS...
...FOR THE SHARPENING OF A SWORD...

IT'S VERY ODD...
SHKK
SHKK

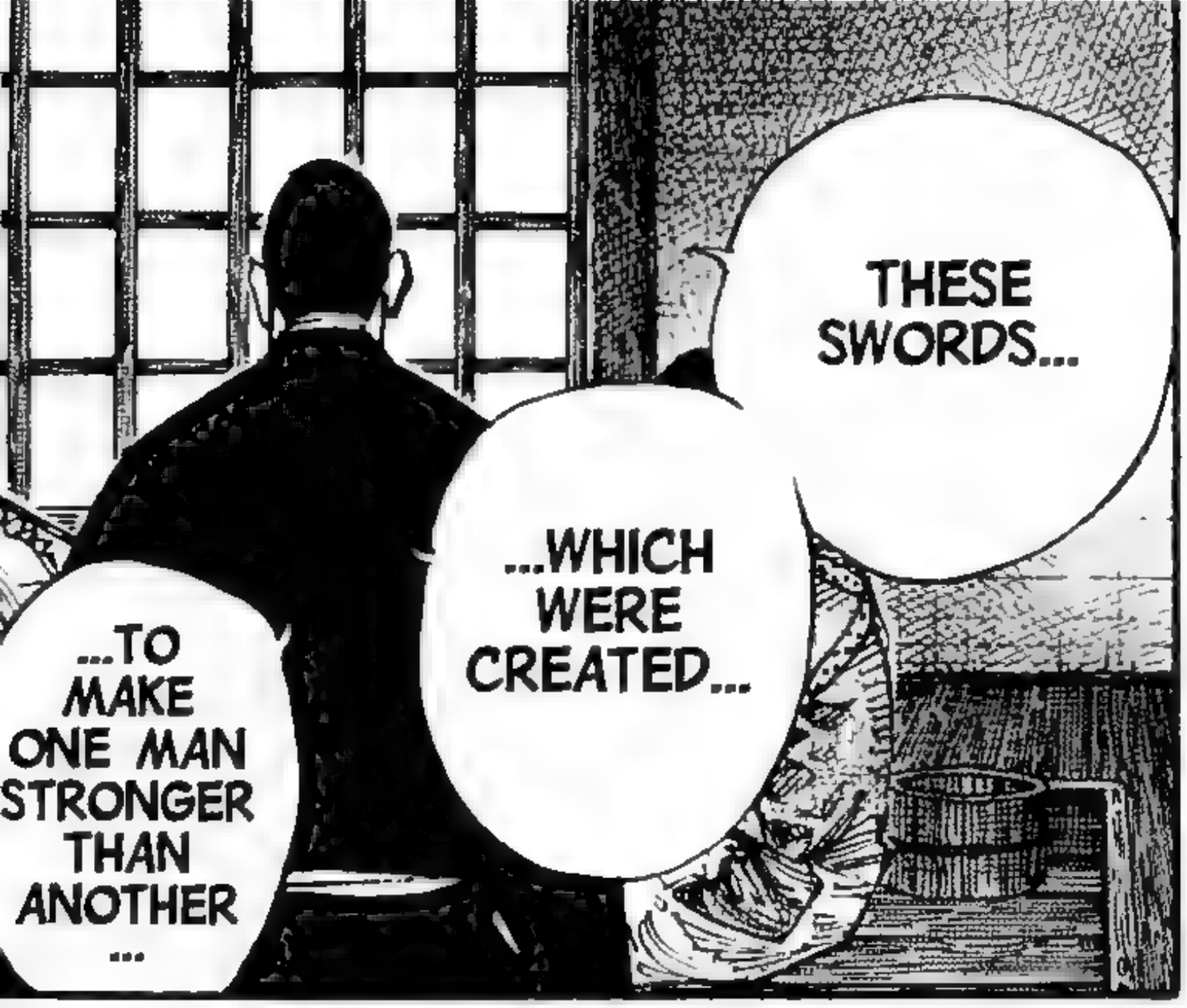
WHY DOES IT HAVE TO EXIST AT ALL?

...

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE IN THIS WORLD.
...
I WONDER.
...!
THOSE WHO ARE MADE MIGHTIER BY THE SWORD...
...AND THOSE WHO ARE WEAKENED BY IT.
...
GRIN
I BELIEVE EVERYONE HAS A BIT OF BOTH IN THEM.

A SWORD DOESN'T SIMPLY EXIST.

IT IS MADE BY MAN.


...TO MAKE ONE MAN STRONGER THAN ANOTHER ...
...WHICH WERE CREATED...
THESE SWORDS...

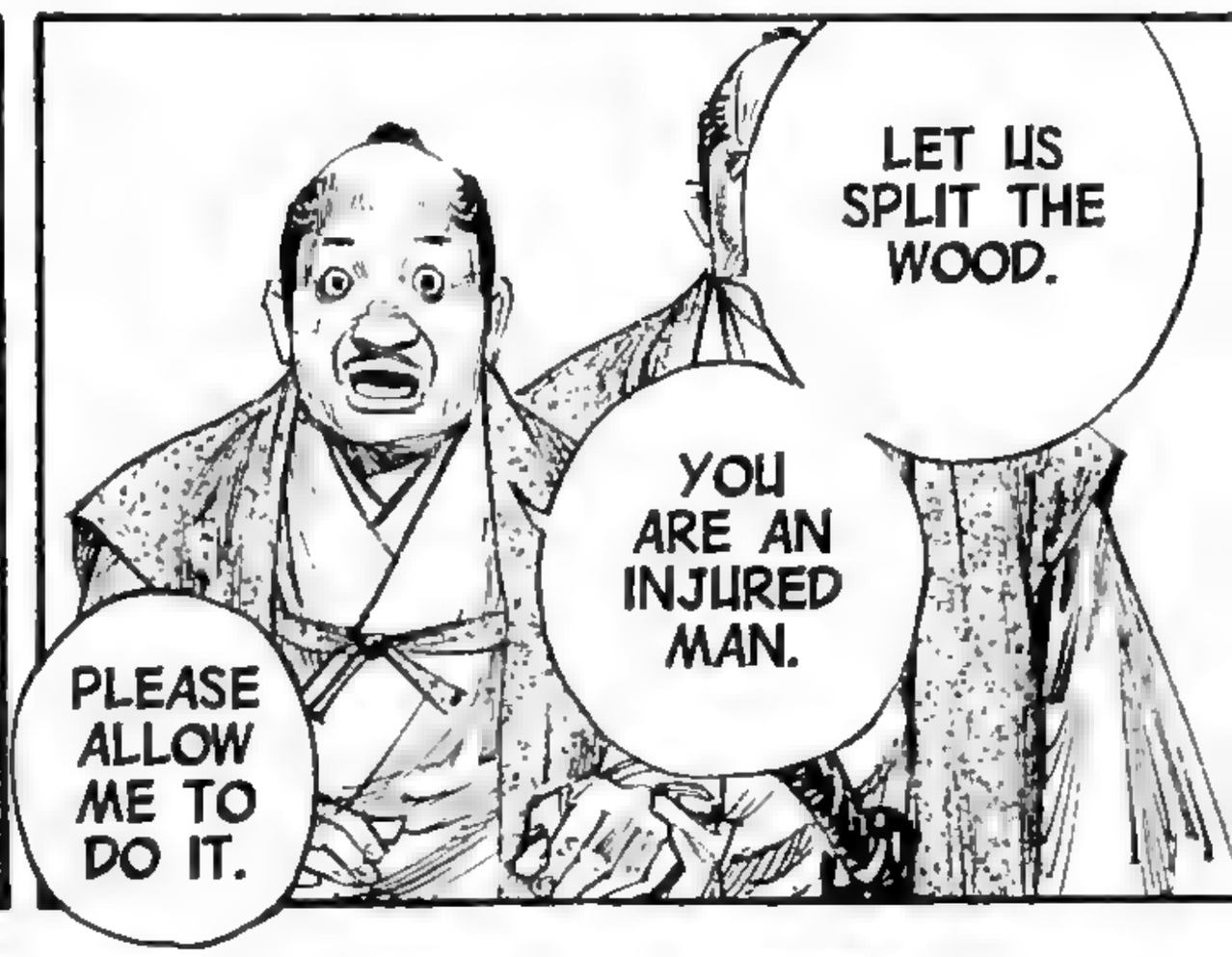
THEN PER-HAPS...
...

...HAVE ULTIMATELY SERVED TO TAKE OURSELVES FARTHER AWAY FROM THE MEANING OF TRUE STRENGTH...

MUSASHI.

KLMP

I'M FEELING RESTLESS.
I'D RATHER DIE THAN SIT AROUND DOING NOTHING.


LET US SPLIT THE WOOD.
YOU ARE AN INJURED MAN.
PLEASE ALLOW ME TO DO IT.

...

KLMP

BUT...

KL

MP

...THEN PERHAPS SWORDS WERE CREATED TO REALIZE OUR WEAKNESSES.

IF THEY TAKE US AWAY FROM TRUE STRENGTH...

...

INDEED.

AFTER ALL, IT IS THE HEAVENS THAT MADE US IN THE FIRST PLACE.

SHKK

SHKK

...

SHKK

SHKK

THERE IS NO STRENGTH THAT HASN'T CROSSED THE PATH OF WEAKNESS.

HUF

HUF

HUF

HUF

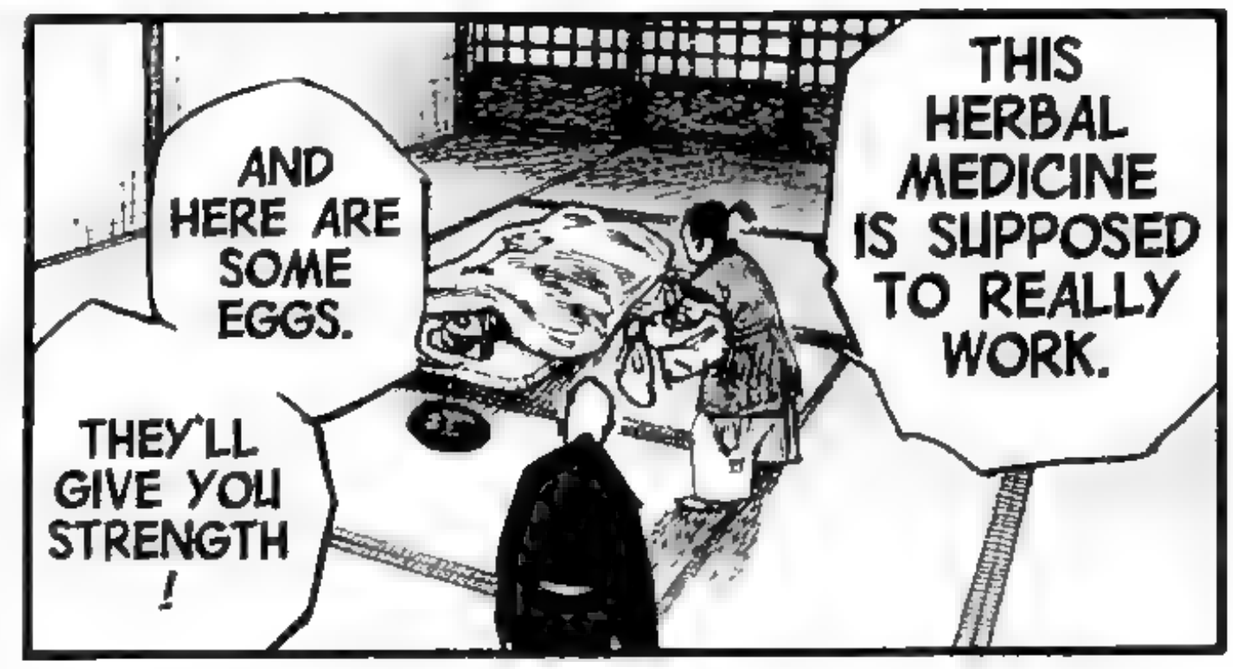
HUF

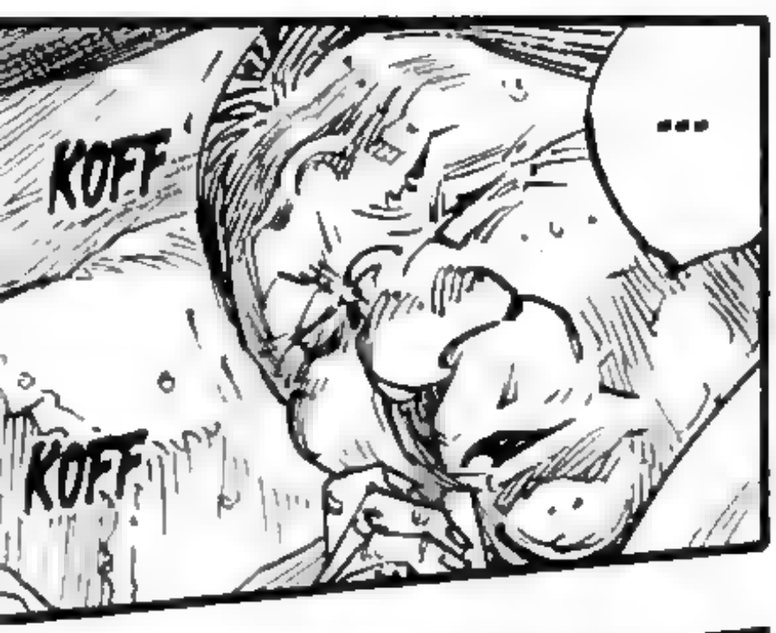
HUF

I GOT IT!

MA!

KOFF
OSUGI, ISN'T IT NICE TO HAVE YOUR SON HERE?


AND HERE ARE SOME EGGS.
THEY'LL GIVE YOU STRENGTH!
THIS HERBAL MEDICINE IS SUPPOSED TO REALLY WORK.


KOFF
KOFF
...

WHO AM I KIDDING?
"DOING ALL RIGHT"?

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT! I'M DOING ALL RIGHT FOR MYSELF!
HERE, LET ME PREPARE THIS FOR YOU.

...
KOFF
KOFF
IT MUST HAVE BEEN EXPENSIVE.
HOW CAN YOU AFFORD IT?

WHAT'S THAT?

AS SOON AS YOU'RE WELL, WE'LL GO BACK TO MIYAMOTO VILLAGE.
MA...

NO MORE LIES.

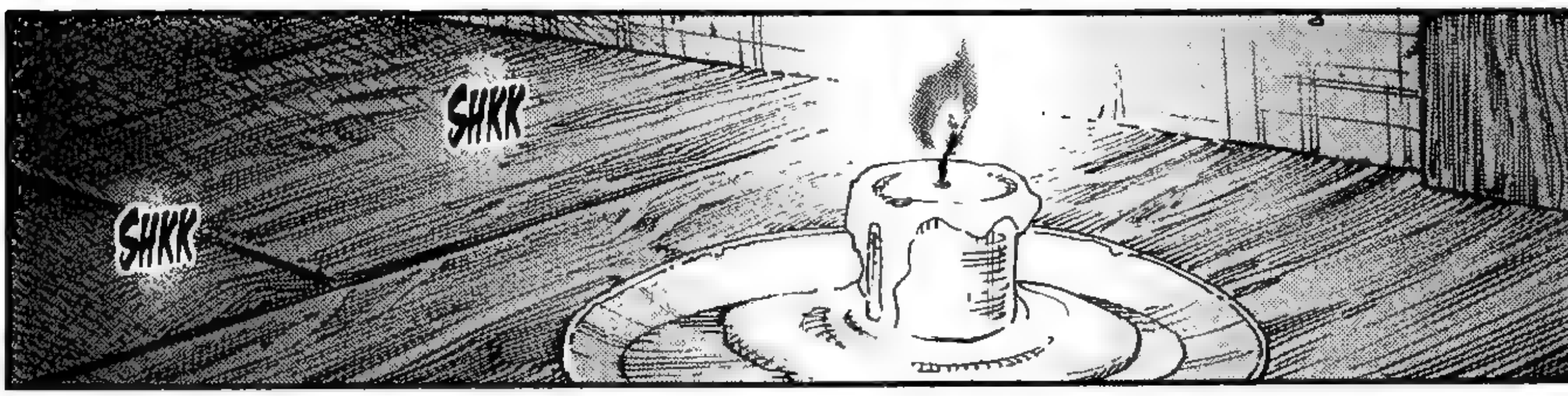
IT WAS IMPRESSIVE AT FIRST, BUT I'VE HAD ENOUGH!
IT'S NO DIFFERENT FROM THE COUNTRY. THERE'S GOOD AND BAD EVERYWHERE.
HEH HEH
I'VE HAD ENOUGH OF KYOTO.

I'LL BECOME THE GREATEST MAN IN THE VILLAGE!
I WANT TO START OVER IN MIYAMOTO!

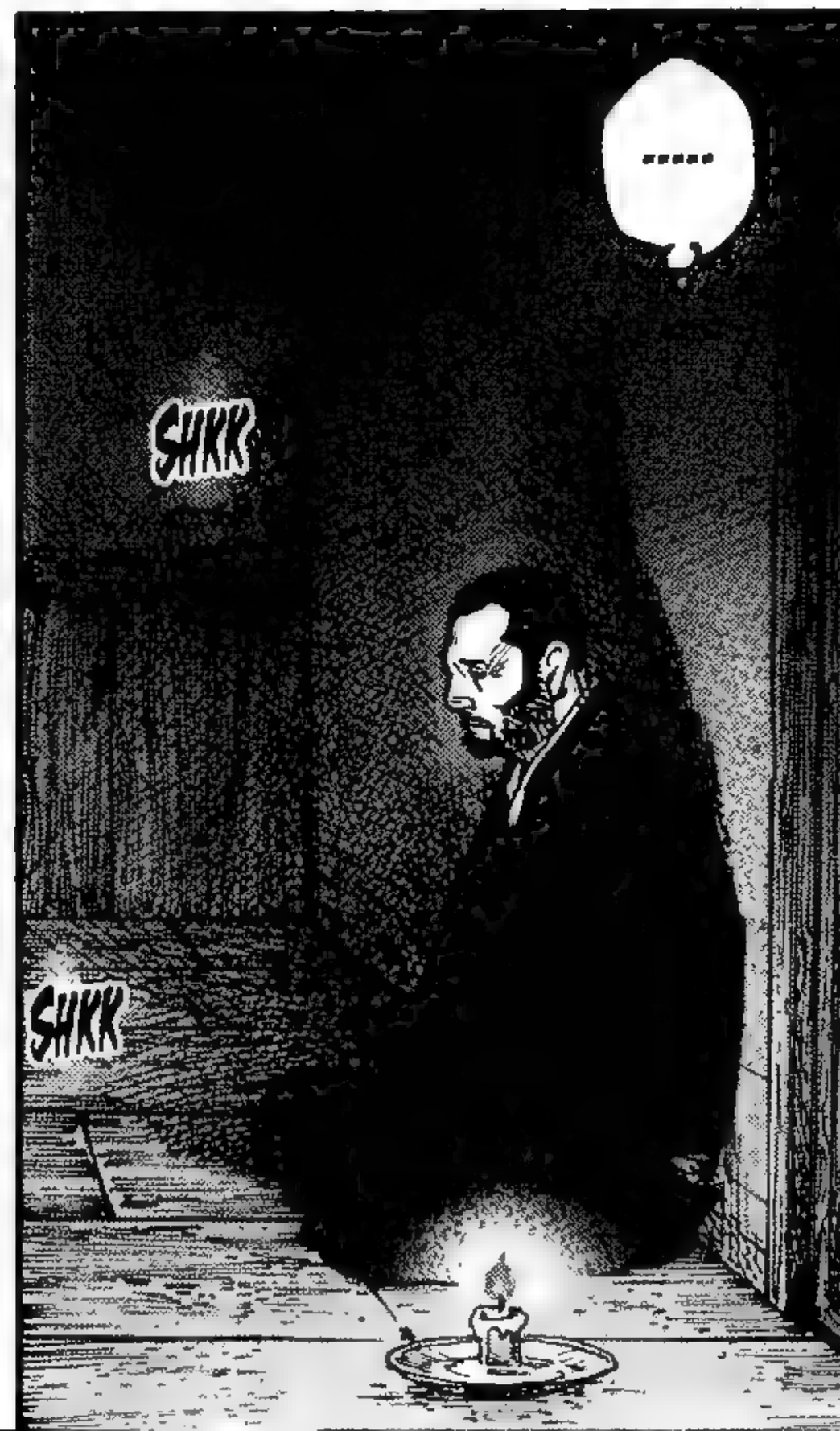
WHY CAN'T I STOP LYING ?
STOP IT, ALREADY.
MATA-HACHI.
KOFF KOFF
I'LL GIVE UP THE NAME I ESTABLISHED FOR MYSELF HERE.
IT'S TOO BAD...
HEH HEH...
MATA-HACHI!
COME ON, EAT UP, MA!
WE CAN'T GO HOME UNLESS YOU GET WELL!
MATA-HACHI.
KOFF
KOFF
KOFF
TAKE THIS MEDICINE !
EVERYONE THERE'S WAITING FOR YOU!
THAT'S RIGHT...
KOFF
KOFF

SHKK

SHKK


SHKK
SHKK

SHKK
SWORDS ARE MADE TO KILL PEOPLE...
...BUT YOU CAN'T DENY THE BEAUTY OF THEM.
WHAT IS THIS CONTRADIC-TION?
SHKK


.....
SHKK
SHKK

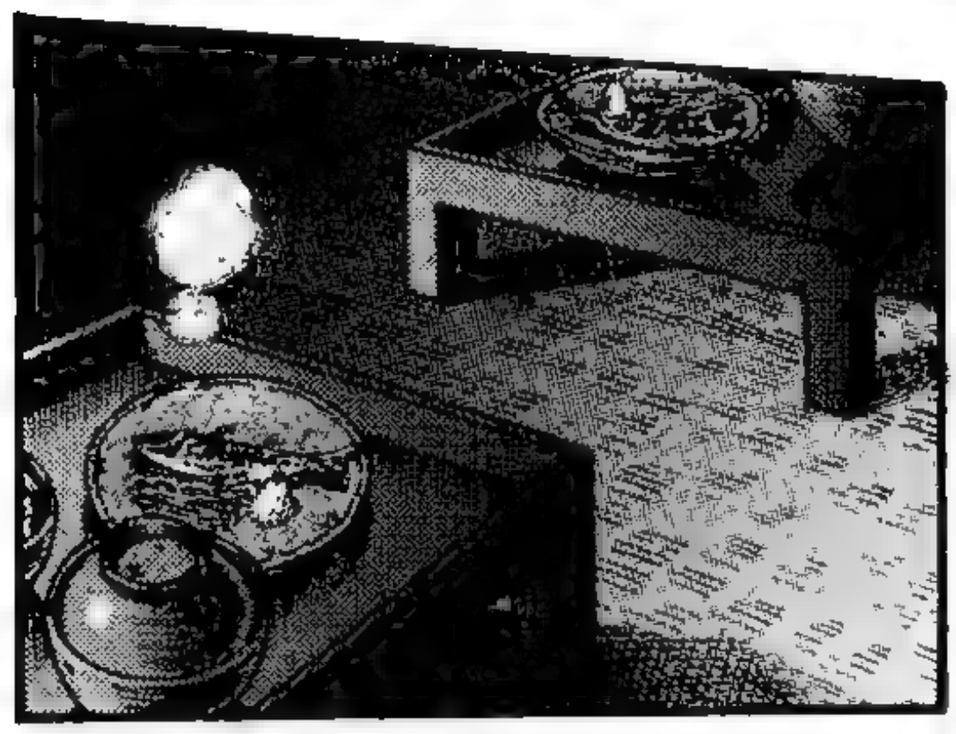
SWORDS ARE BEAUTIFUL BECAUSE THEY CAN KILL.
THERE'S NO BEAUTY IN A SWORD THAT CAN'T CUT.
PLIP
AND BECAUSE IT IS A TOOL CREATED FOR KILLING, THE MORE IT DOES SO THE MORE BEAUTIFUL IT GETS.
AND IF ONE WERE TO TRULY APPROACH SUCH BEAUTY...
...A BEAUTY THAT CAN GIVE YOU CHILLS...

...THE WIELDER WOULD BE COMPLETELY IMMERSED IN IT.

...STRENGTH AND BEAUTY BECOME ONE.
IF SUCH BEAUTY EVER EXISTED...
...IT WOULDN'T BE NECESSARY FOR IT TO KILL.
BECAUSE...
THAT LINE OF THINKING IS WHAT ALLOWS ME TO LAY MY HANDS ON A SWORD.

...
GRRR
GRRR

...



HAH!
LET'S EAT!
IT'S MORNING!
THANK YOU.

SHEATHS FOR EACH OTHER.

ALONE, THEY MAY HAVE ENDED UP ON THE FRINGE...

BUT AS LONG AS THEY BOTH EXIST IN THIS WORLD, THEY MAY FIND A PLACE FOR THEMSELVES IN IT.

I DON'T KNOW HOW ELSE TO SAY IT.

I FEEL THE SAME WAY.

KŌETSU...

I'M HAPPY TO HEAR THIS.

PERHAPS THE HOSOKAWA CLAN WILL TAKE IN ONE MORE.

HA HA.

LET'S SEE IF WE CAN GET MUSASHI TO KOKURA TOO.

SLURP
IT'S BITTER.

# #267 | Crossroads

SO...

THIS IS YOUR WORK?

.....
AMAZ-ING...

YOU CAN'T HELP BUT NOTICE IT.
GO AHEAD AND HOLD IT...

HA HA HA...
I SEE.
INDEED IT IS...

...BUT ONCE YOU RELAX AND LOOK AT IT STRAIGHT AWAY...
YOU CAN'T SEE IT IF YOUR SOUL IS TOO TIGHT...
...MANY FACES BEGIN TO APPEAR.

...
ONCE YOU OPEN UP YOUR HEART...

...

...EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD IS BEAUTIFUL...

MUSASHI ONCE SAID...

HE'S REALIZED THERE'S MORE.

NOW...

HE SURVIVED.

HE WILL GO ON LIVING.

CUT PEOPLE DOWN...

...AND DIE IN MORTAL COMBAT.

THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO LIFE, HE SAID.

MUSASHI...

...WAS VERY LUCKY TO HAVE MET YOU, KŌETSU.

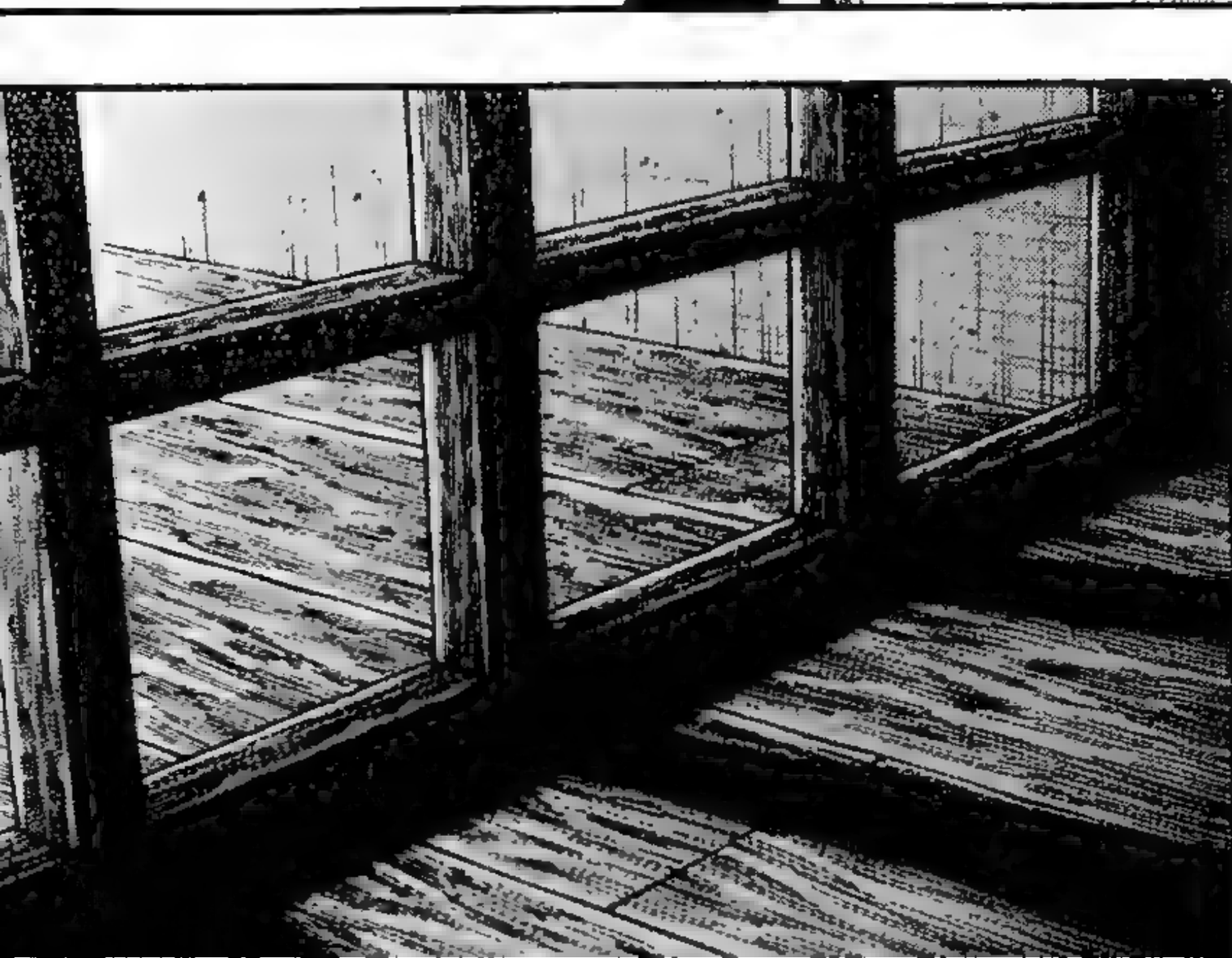
I CAN'T THANK YOU ENOUGH.

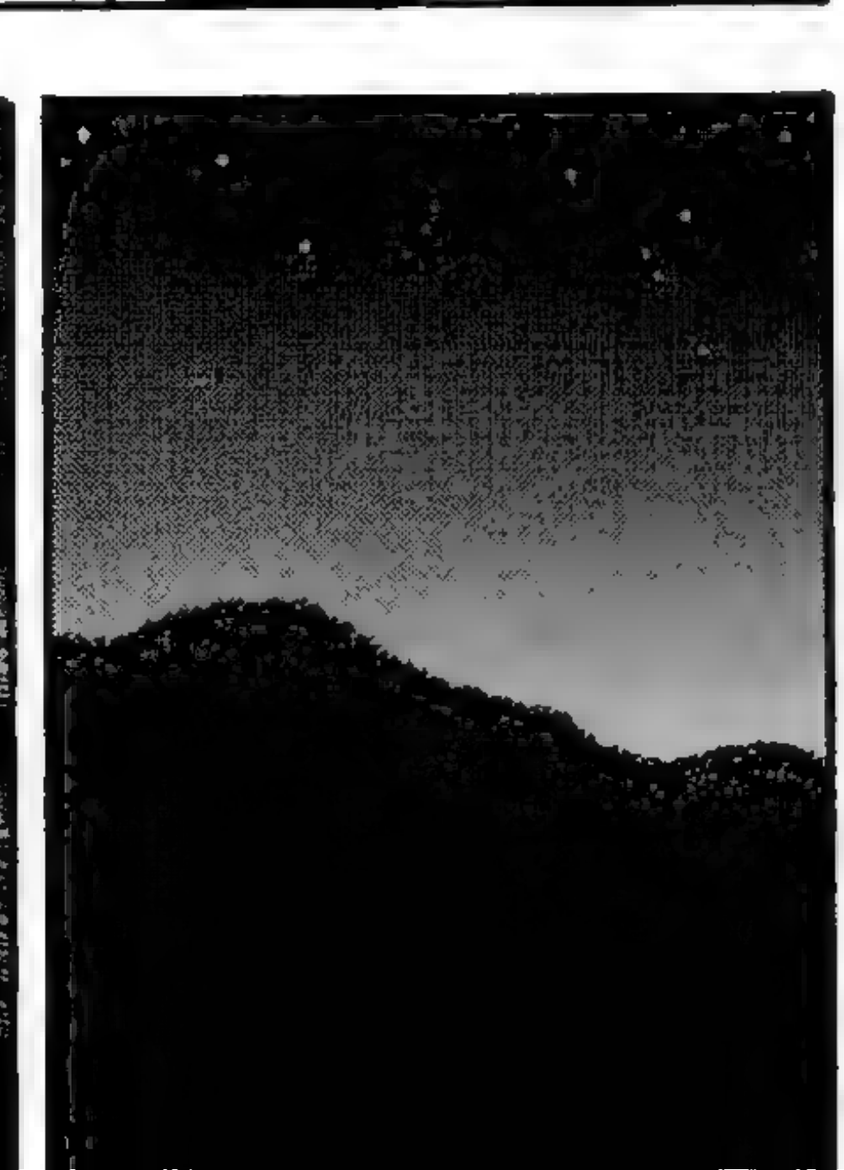
...THE SECOND TOKUGAWA SHOGUN.

FROM WHOM?
WELL ...

I RECEIVED A LETTER OF INQUIRY ON MUSASHI FROM EDO.

YOU MEAN HIDETADA!!
...!!





THERE WON'T BE A SOUL AROUND WHO HASN'T HEARD OF ME!!
SHINMEN TAKEZŌ!
SO AM I!
I'M GOING TO MAKE IT BIG!
SAME FOR HON'IDEN MATAHACHI!
HA HA! WE'LL MAKE A NAME FOR OURSELVES, WE WILL!!

BY THE WAY, MATA-HACHI.
WHAT'S THAT MEAN-- TO MAKE A NAME FOR YOURSELF?

...

I'M AT A DEAD END.
IT LOOKS LIKE I'M AT THE END OF THE ROAD.

I FIGURED YOU WERE JUST GOING ALONG WITH ME.
YOU AND I ARE DIFFERENT.

HUH? DID YOU REALLY MEAN IT?

...I BET YOU'D KEEP ON SWINGING AWAY, MUMBLING TO YOURSELF.

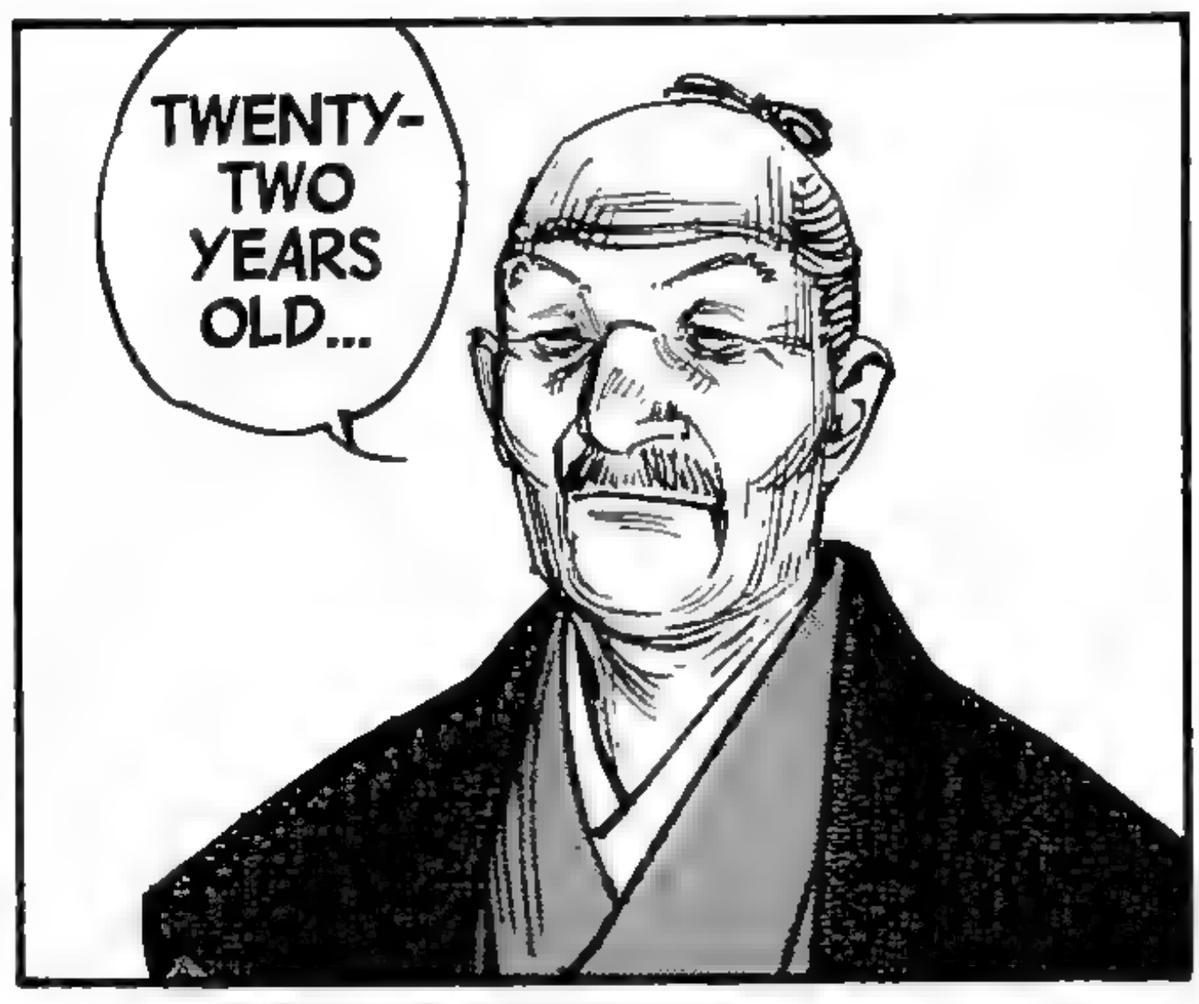
EVEN IF YOU WERE THE ONLY PERSON LEFT IN THE WORLD...

.....
SIR ITAKURA WOULD LIKE TO SEE YOU.
KLMP
MUSASHI ...
...WHERE YOU COULD NO LONGER TASTE IT.
...YOU REACHED A POINT...
SO AFTER SO MANY VICTORIES...

BEING INVINCIBLE IS A MIRAGE...

SO YOU SAY...

...



WHY NOT SPREAD THIS WISDOM YOU'VE OBTAINED IN A MERE 22 YEARS...

...TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF THIS COUNTRY.

MU-SASHI...

*INVINCIBILITY IS A MIRAGE...*

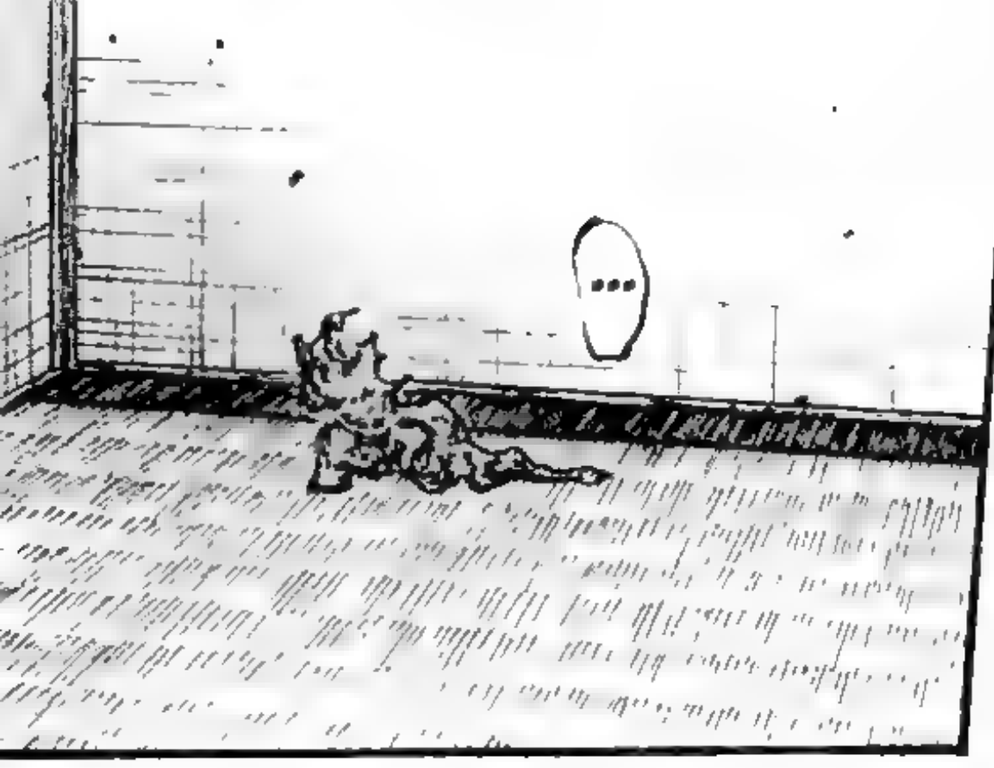
.....

HUH?

...

NO...

YOU COULD DO IT IF YOU HAVE THE SUPPORT OF A GREAT LEADER.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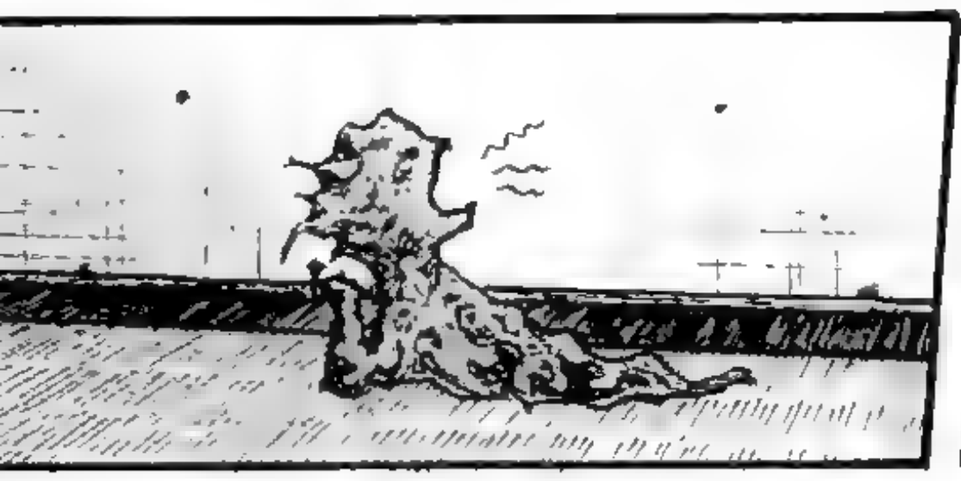


THAT'S NOT MY THING...

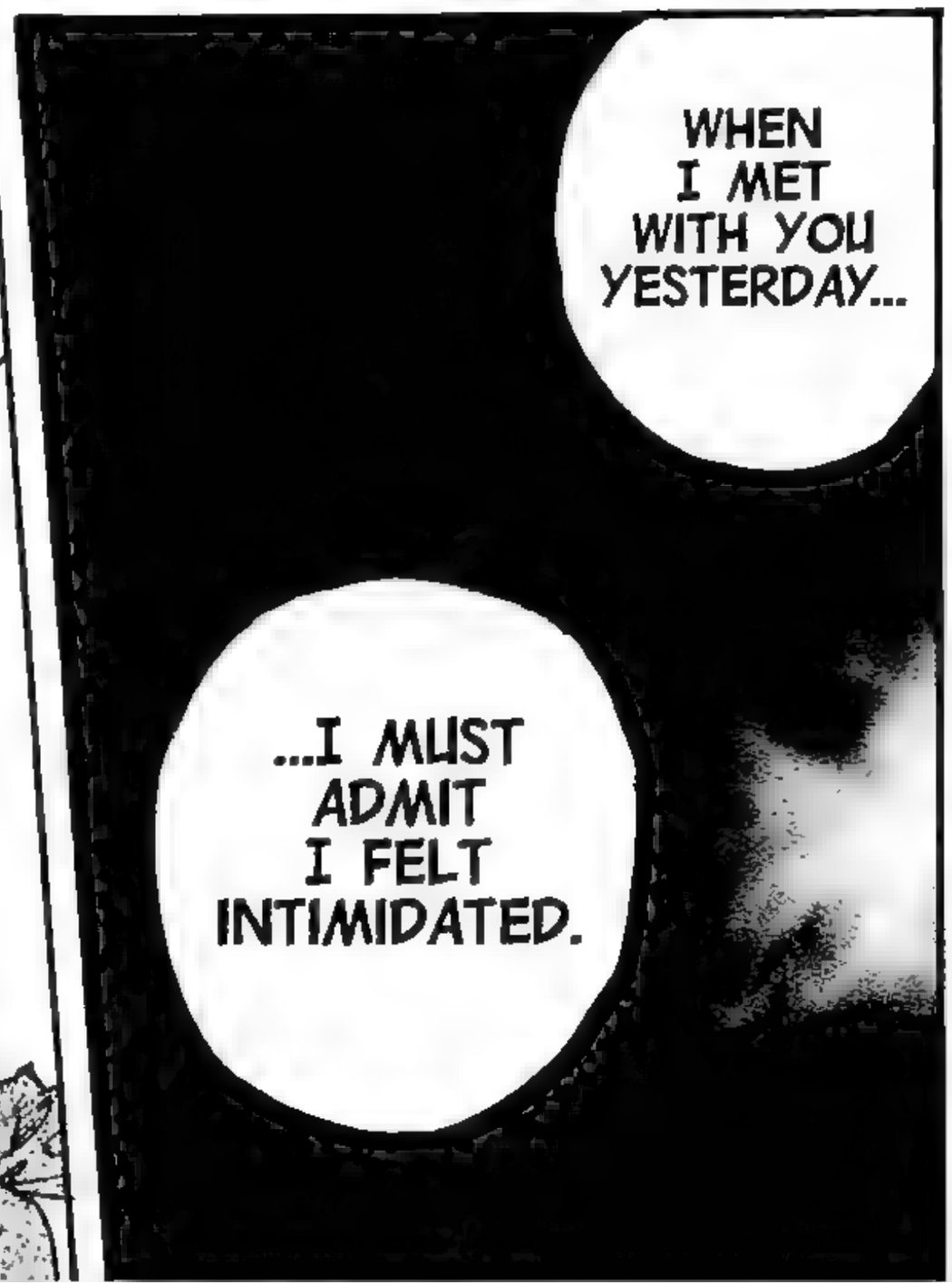
...

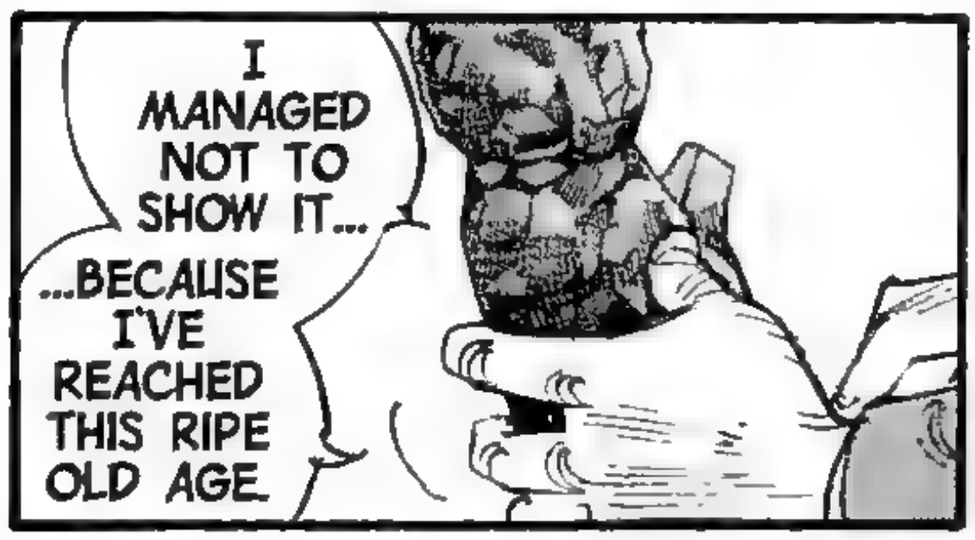
SIGH
OOPS.

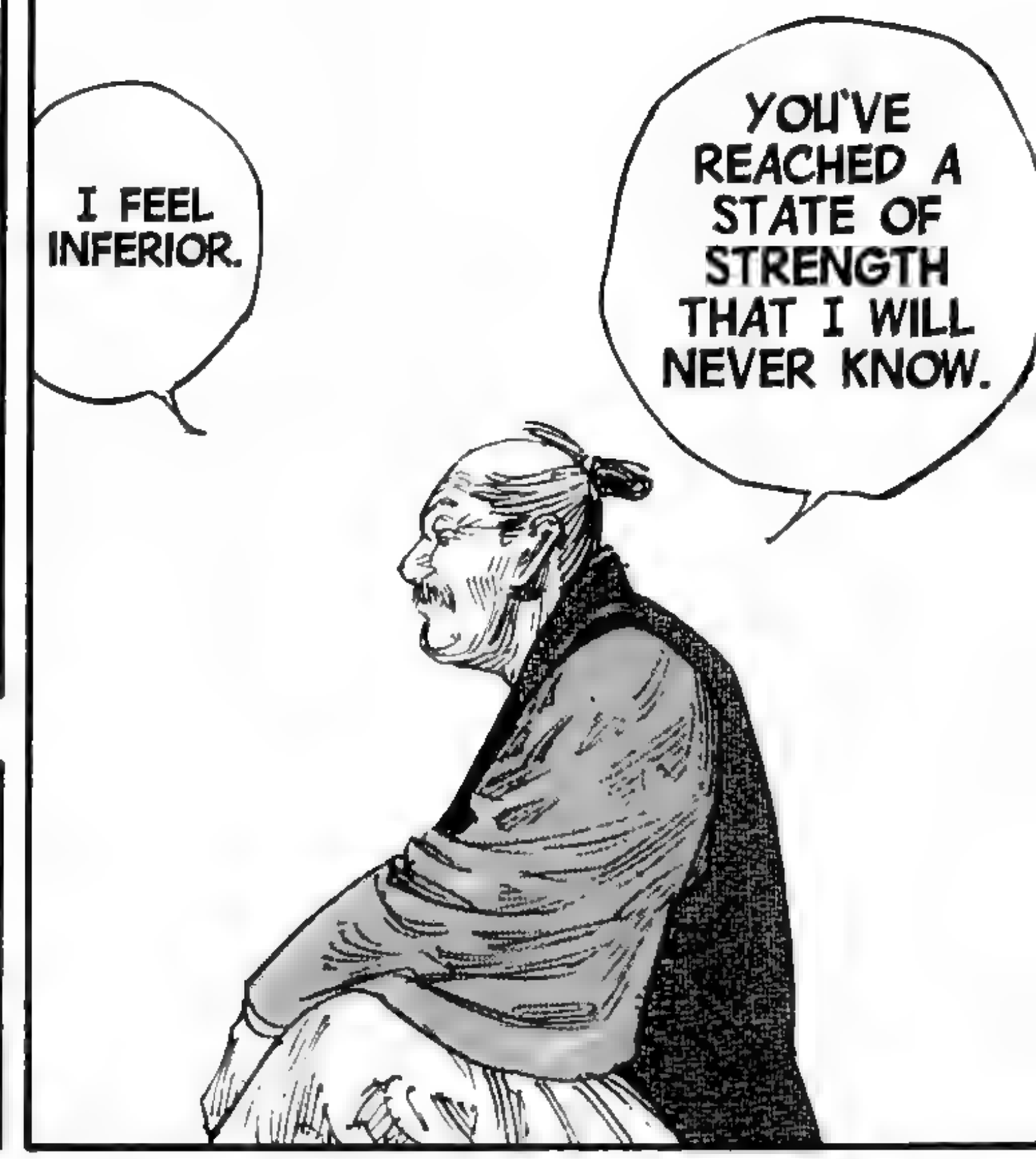
KRAK

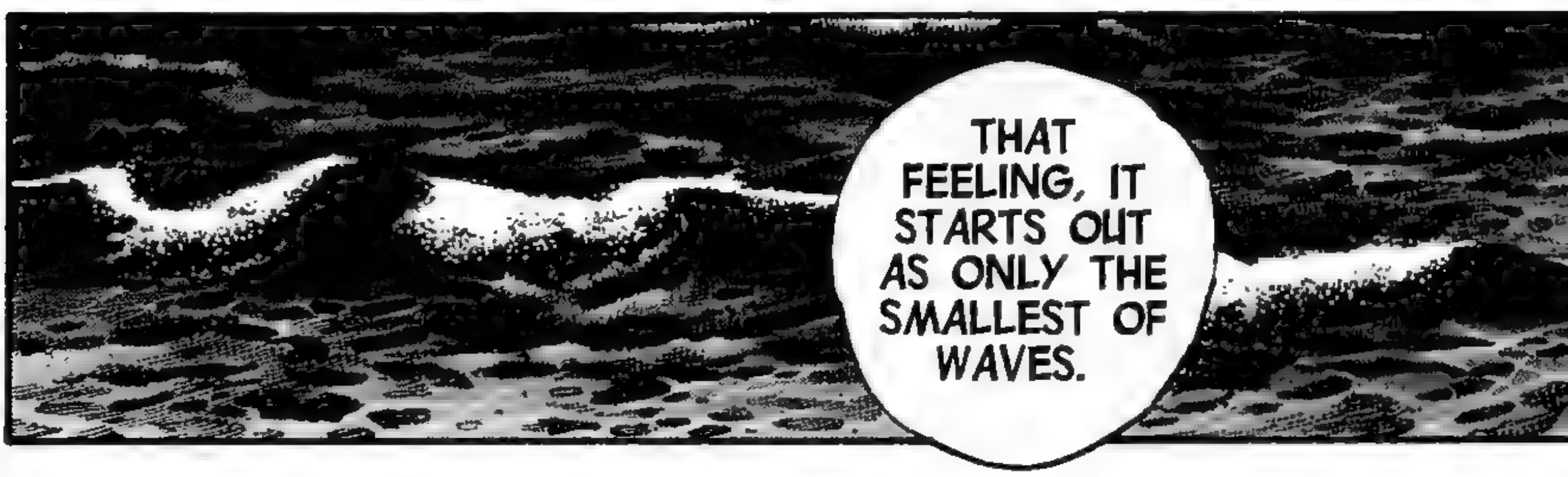
I HAVE FOLLOWED THE WAY OF THE SWORD TOO... PERHAPS MORE THAN MOST.
THAT'S WHY...

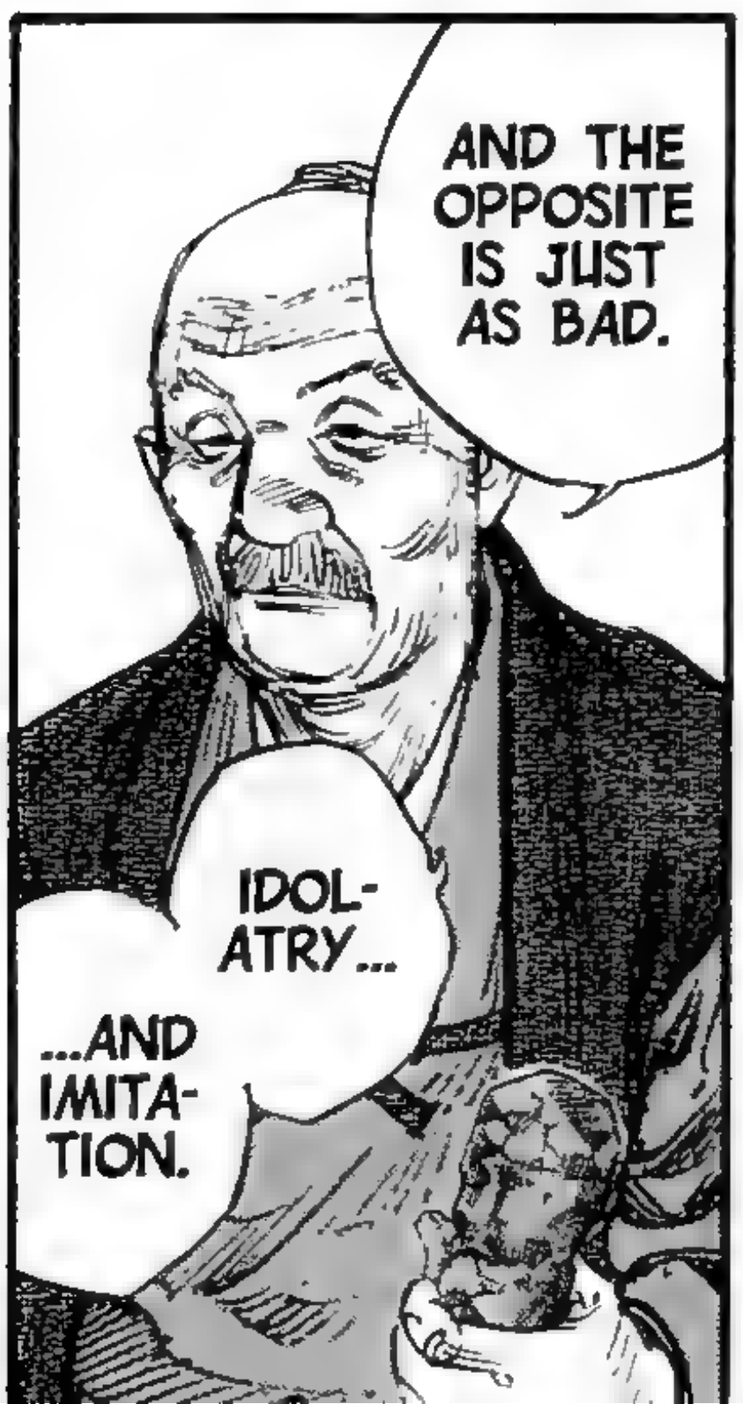
HOW SO...?

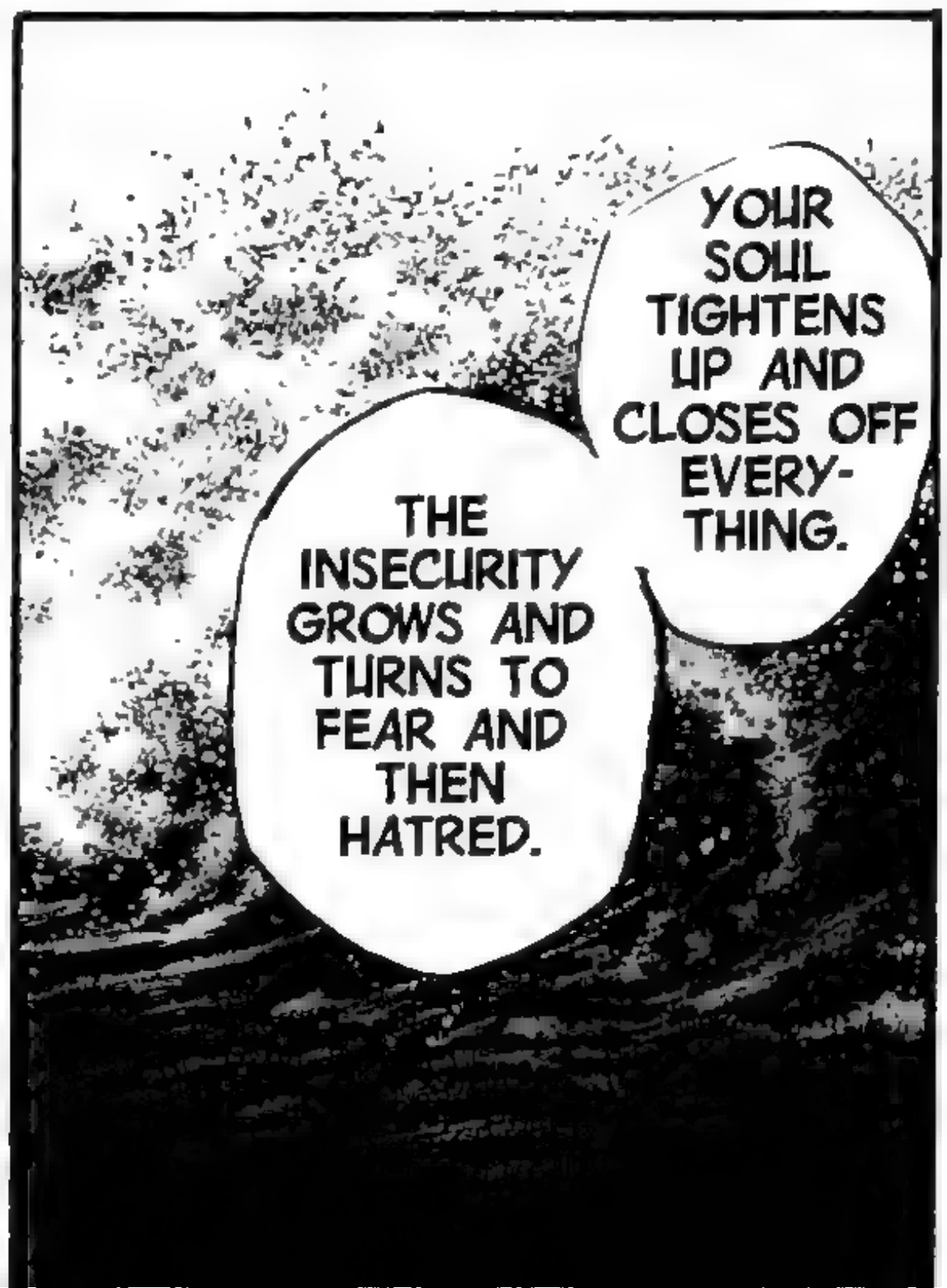

WHEN I MET WITH YOU YESTERDAY...
...I MUST ADMIT I FELT INTIMIDATED.


I MANAGED NOT TO SHOW IT...
...BECAUSE I'VE REACHED THIS RIPE OLD AGE.


I FEEL INFERIOR.
YOU'VE REACHED A STATE OF STRENGTH THAT I WILL NEVER KNOW.

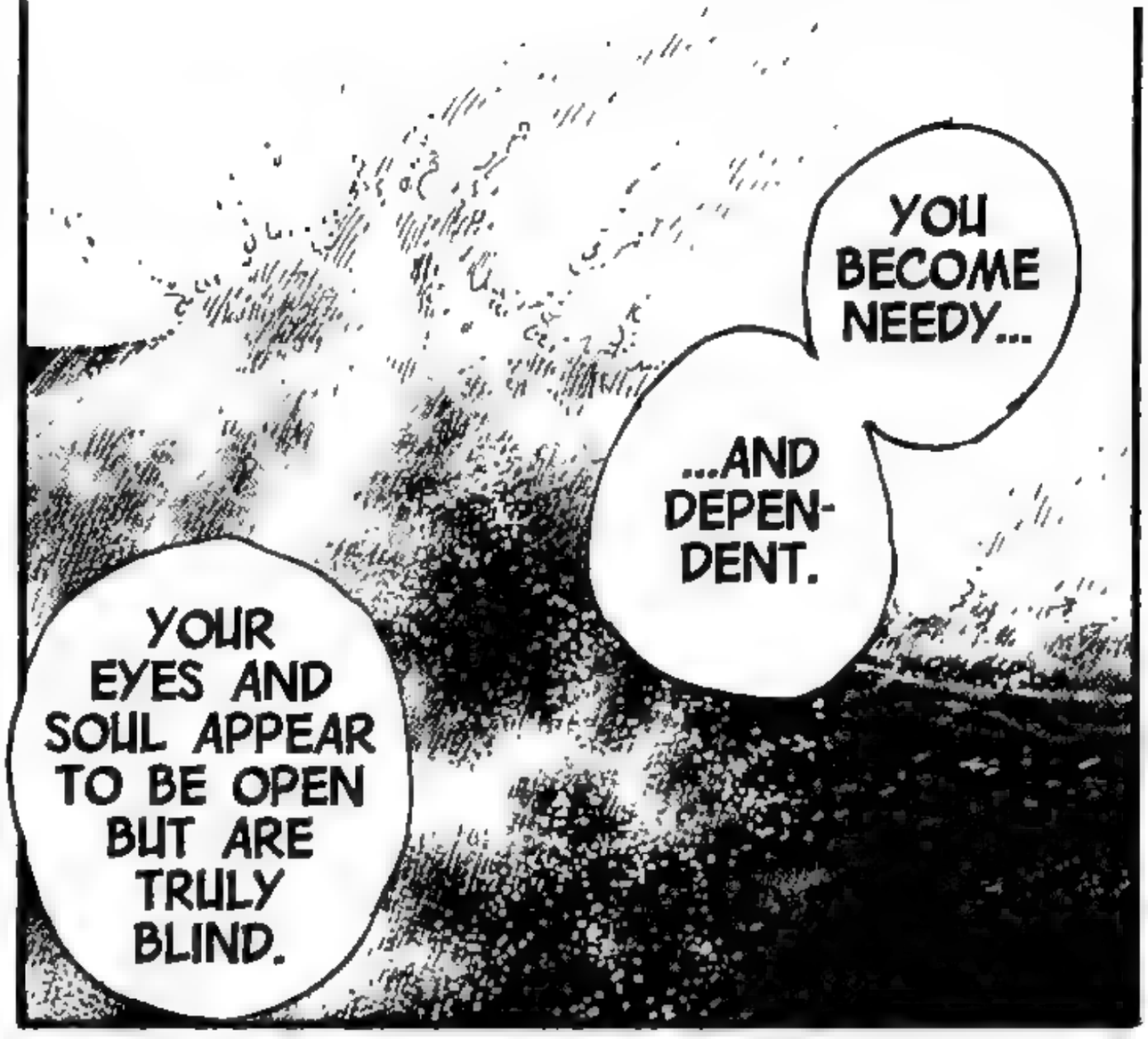

THAT FEELING, IT STARTS OUT AS ONLY THE SMALLEST OF WAVES.

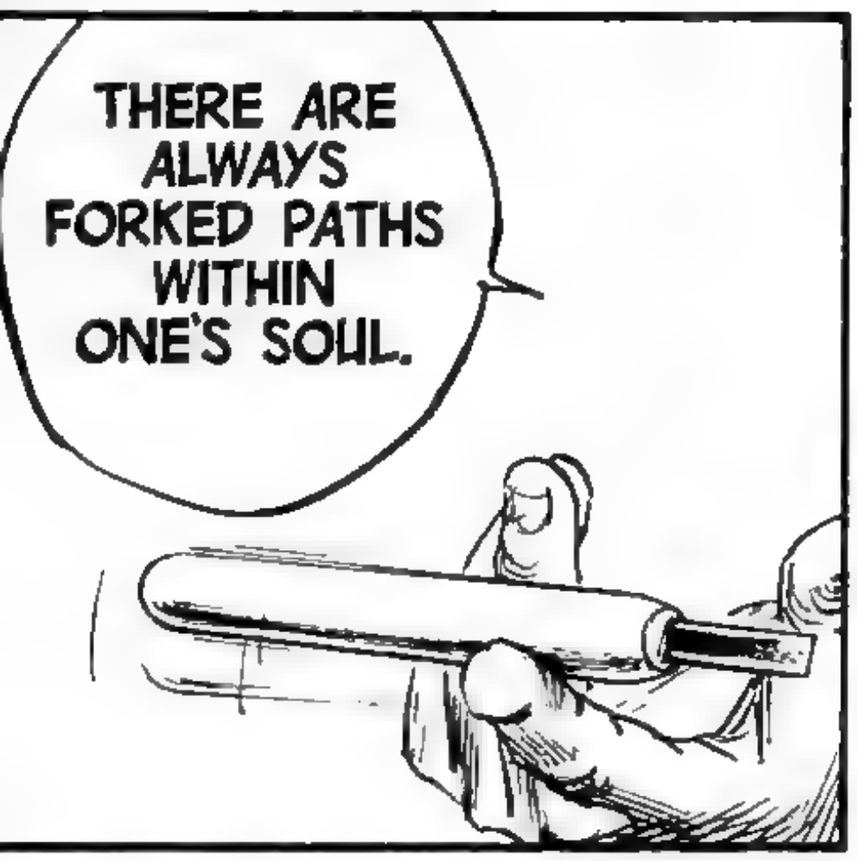

AND THE OPPOSITE IS JUST AS BAD.
IDOL-ATRY...
...AND IMITA-TION.


YOUR SOUL TIGHTENS UP AND CLOSES OFF EVERY-THING.
THE INSECURITY GROWS AND TURNS TO FEAR AND THEN HATRED.

ONCE THE HEART BECOMES INSECURE, IT FREEZES UP.

...
DOES BEING STRONG GIVE YOU THE RIGHT TO DO AS YOU PLEASE?
I DON'T THINK SO, DO YOU?


YOU BECOME NEEDY...
...AND DEPEN-DENT.
YOUR EYES AND SOUL APPEAR TO BE OPEN BUT ARE TRULY BLIND.


THERE ARE ALWAYS FORKED PATHS WITHIN ONE'S SOUL.

I'M SORRY. HA HA...
OH?
I MUST BE RAMBLING.
I GOT SO EXCITED ONCE I REALIZED THIS YESTERDAY, I WANTED TO TELL YOU ABOUT IT.

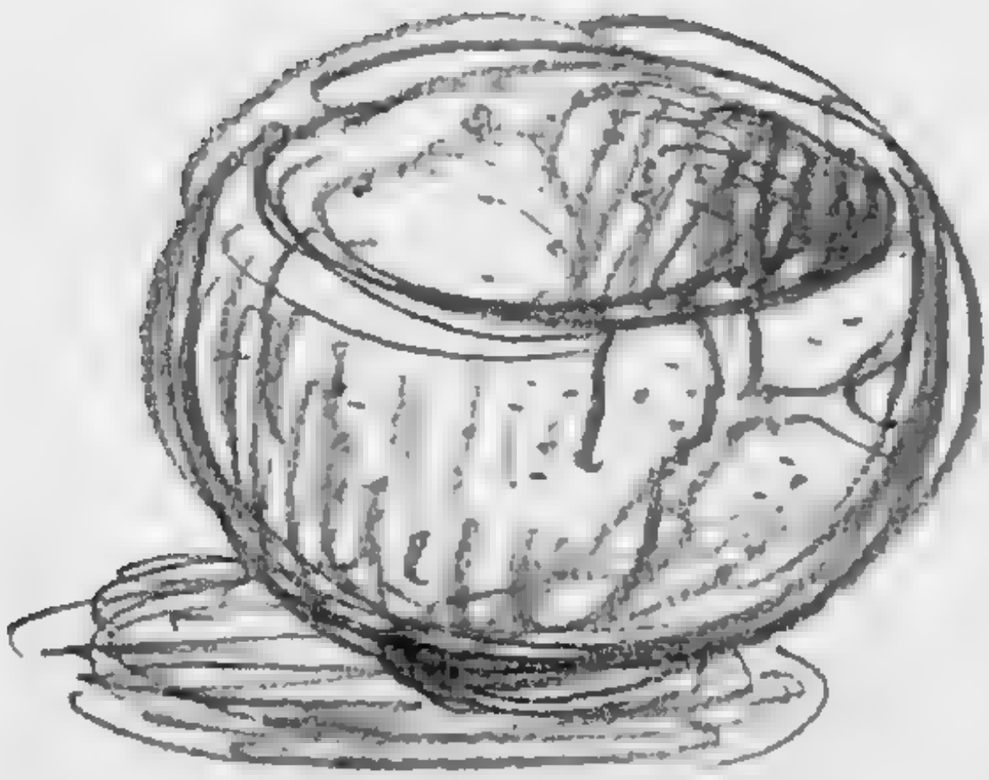
THIS IS GETTING COMPLICATED, AND I DON'T REALLY UNDER-STAND.
I'M SORRY ...

IT'S BEST TO TAKE THE ONE AT THE CENTER.

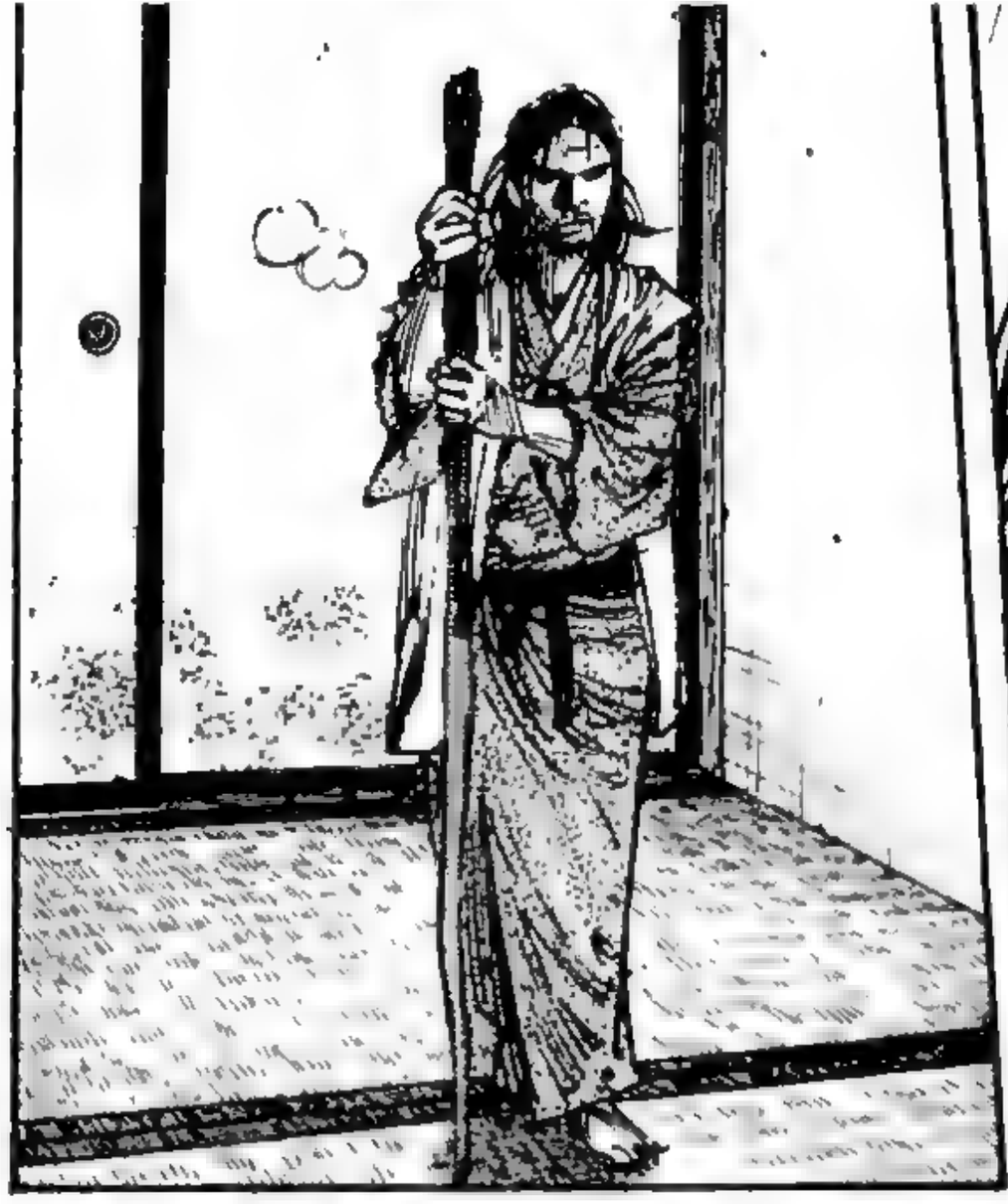
THAT I UNDERSTAND...

...?
I SEE.
THE GUARD GAVE IT TO ME.
EVERYONE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY, MUSASHI.
MUSASHI...
IF SOMEONE SHOULD OFFER YOU A POST, YOU MUST SERVE THEM.
...AND START A FAMILY.
SAY, WITH OTSŪ?
...
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TIME YOU CHOSE ANOTHER PATH, MUSASHI?

I THOUGHT I WAS BEING HELD AS A PRISONER...
WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE SUCH RESPECT?
MUSASHI ...
YOU CAN DO THIS, CAN YOU NOT?
YOU CAN TEACH OTHERS ABOUT WHAT YOU'VE LEARNED AT THE END OF YOUR BATTLES.
I DON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY TO ANY-ONE...
AND I'M NOT THE TYPE TO TEACH.
...
WHY ME...?
.....



# #268 On the Edge of the Sword



...

WELL...
LET'S SEE...

MUSASHI ...
...DO YOU HAVE ANY FRIENDS?

I DON'T THINK I CAN REALLY EXPLAIN IT.

YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE THE SHOSHIDAI OF KYOTO.

OF COURSE NOT!

DON'T BE SO SOFT!

.....

I DON'T KNOW.

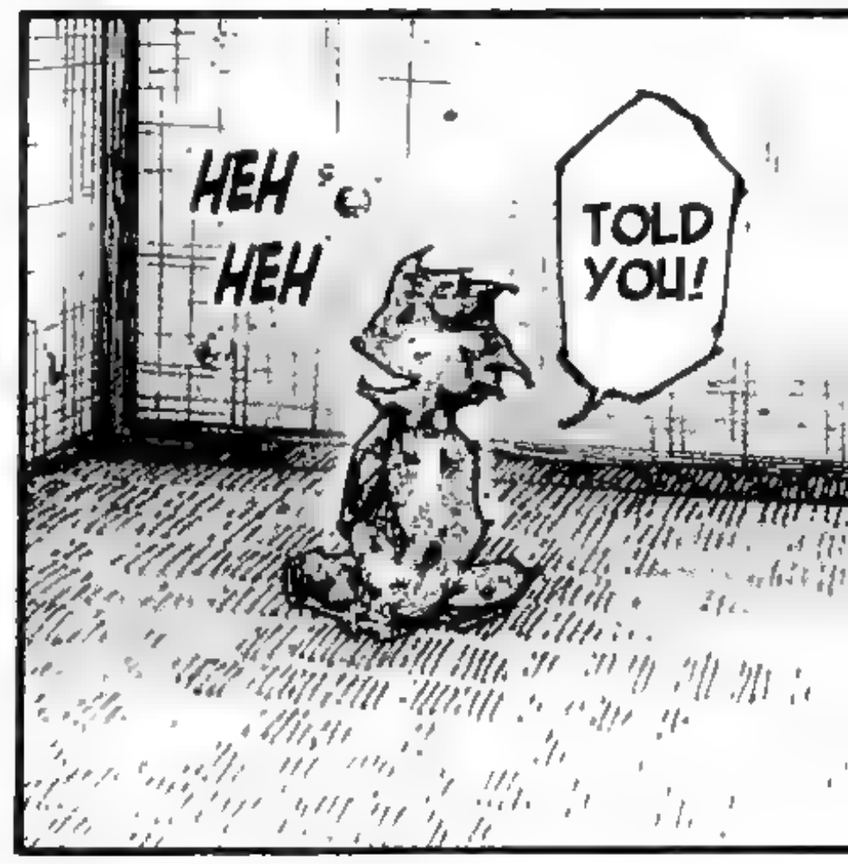
AND I HAVE NO CHILDREN...

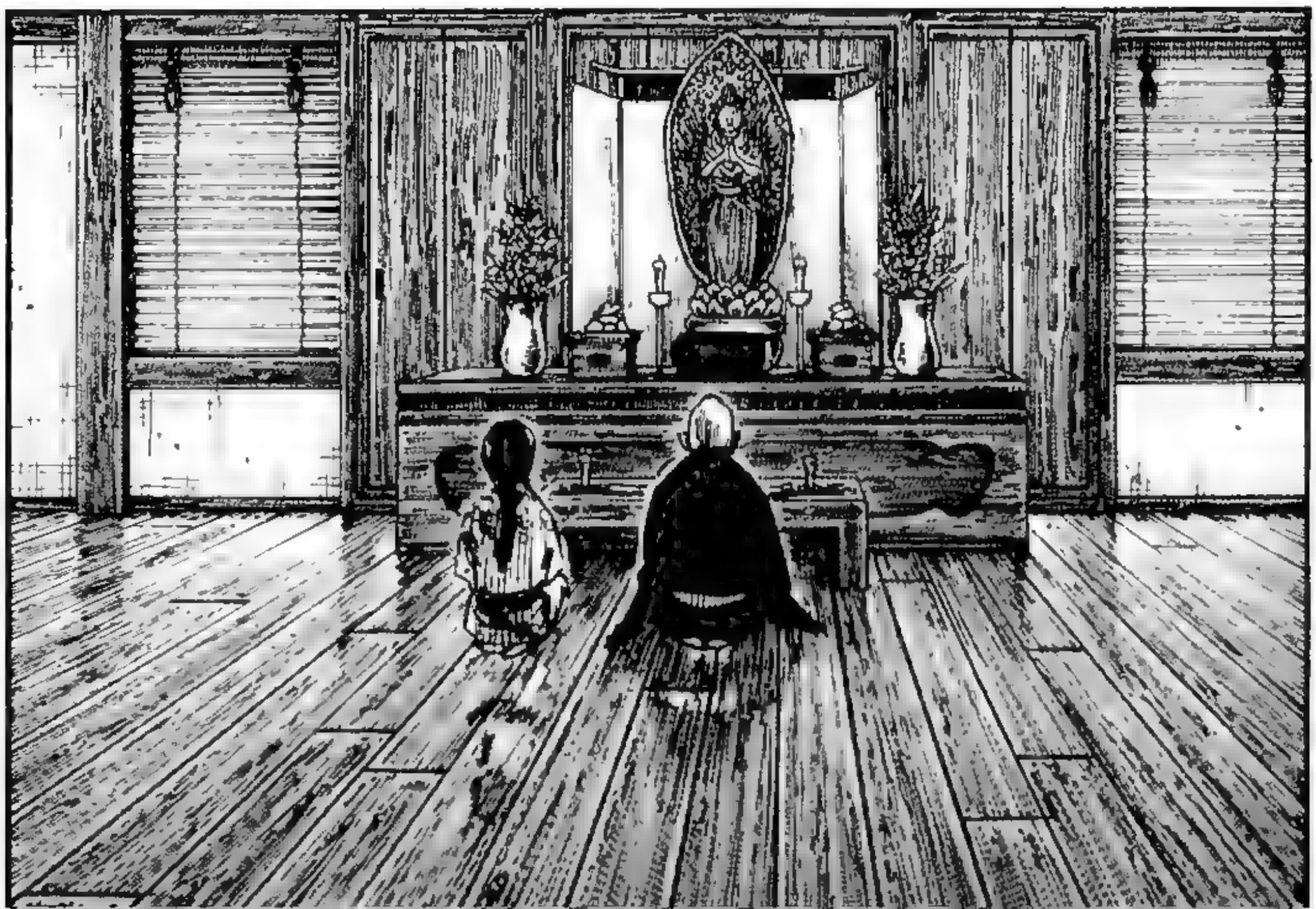
.....

WILL THE BATTLES EVER END?

HE JUST SAT THERE GIGGLING.
SKWOOSH
THIS MORNING, MY 2-YEAR-OLD GRANDSON WAS GIGGLING AFTER CRUSHING A SPIDER.

...


HEH HEH
TOLD YOU!



SOME-ONE YOU'VE KNOWN SINCE YOU WERE A CHILD.

THE LATE YOSHIOKA KEMPŌ.

THAT MAN...

...WAS A DEAR FRIEND OF MINE. WE TRAINED TOGETHER SINCE WE WERE YOUNG BOYS.

OF COURSE, I WAS NO MATCH AGAINST HIM.

HA HA

BUT WHAT'S THAT MATTER BETWEEN FRIENDS.

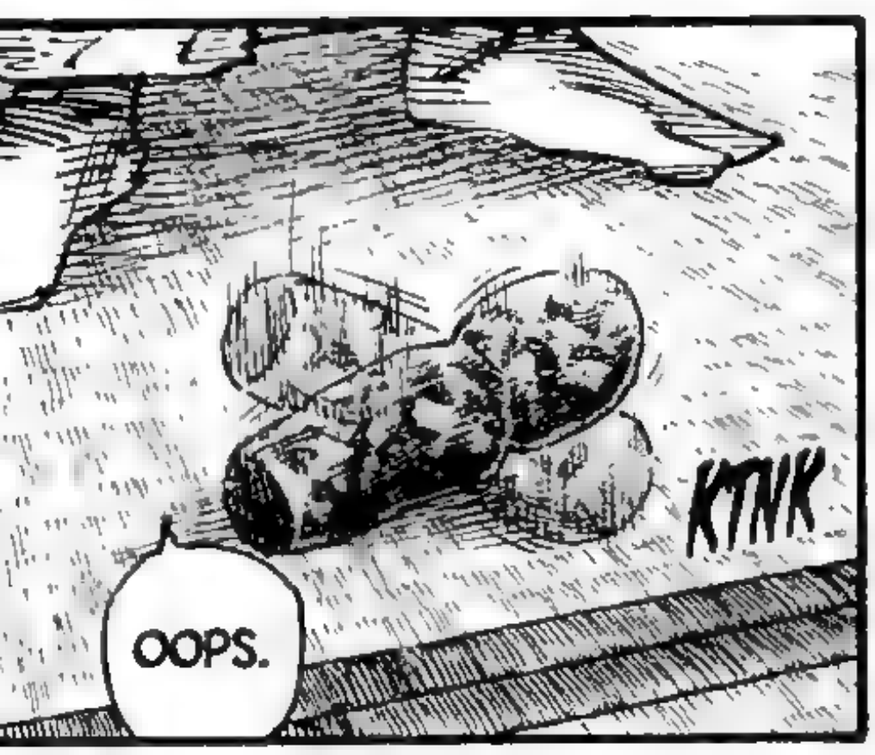
!

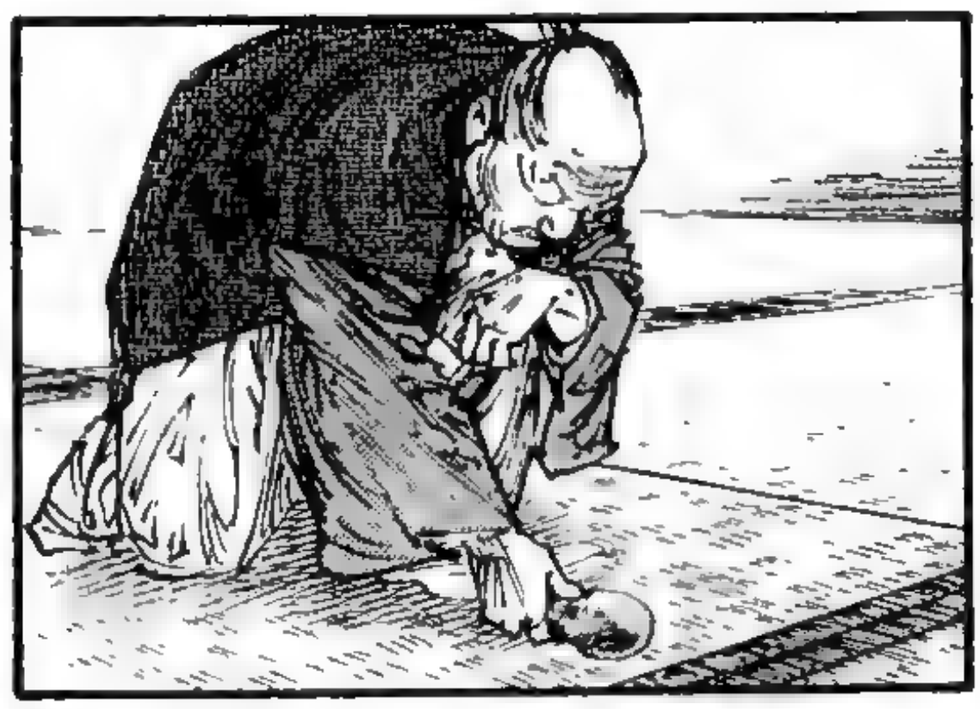
I HELD BOTH SEIJŪRŌ AND DENSHICHIRŌ IN MY ARMS WHEN THEY WERE INFANTS.

THAT'S A DIFFERENT MATTER.

I'M NOT SAYING THIS BECAUSE I HAVE A GRUDGE AGAINST YOU.

I BELIEVE THE GUILT IN THE BATTLE AT ICHIJŌJI IS ON THE YOSHIOKA'S SIDE.





...THEN WHEN PEOPLE CONFRONT EACH OTHER FACE TO FACE LIKE THIS...
IF EVERYONE COULD BE AS STRONG AS YOU...
FSH
BOTH SIDES COULD REMAIN CENTERED...

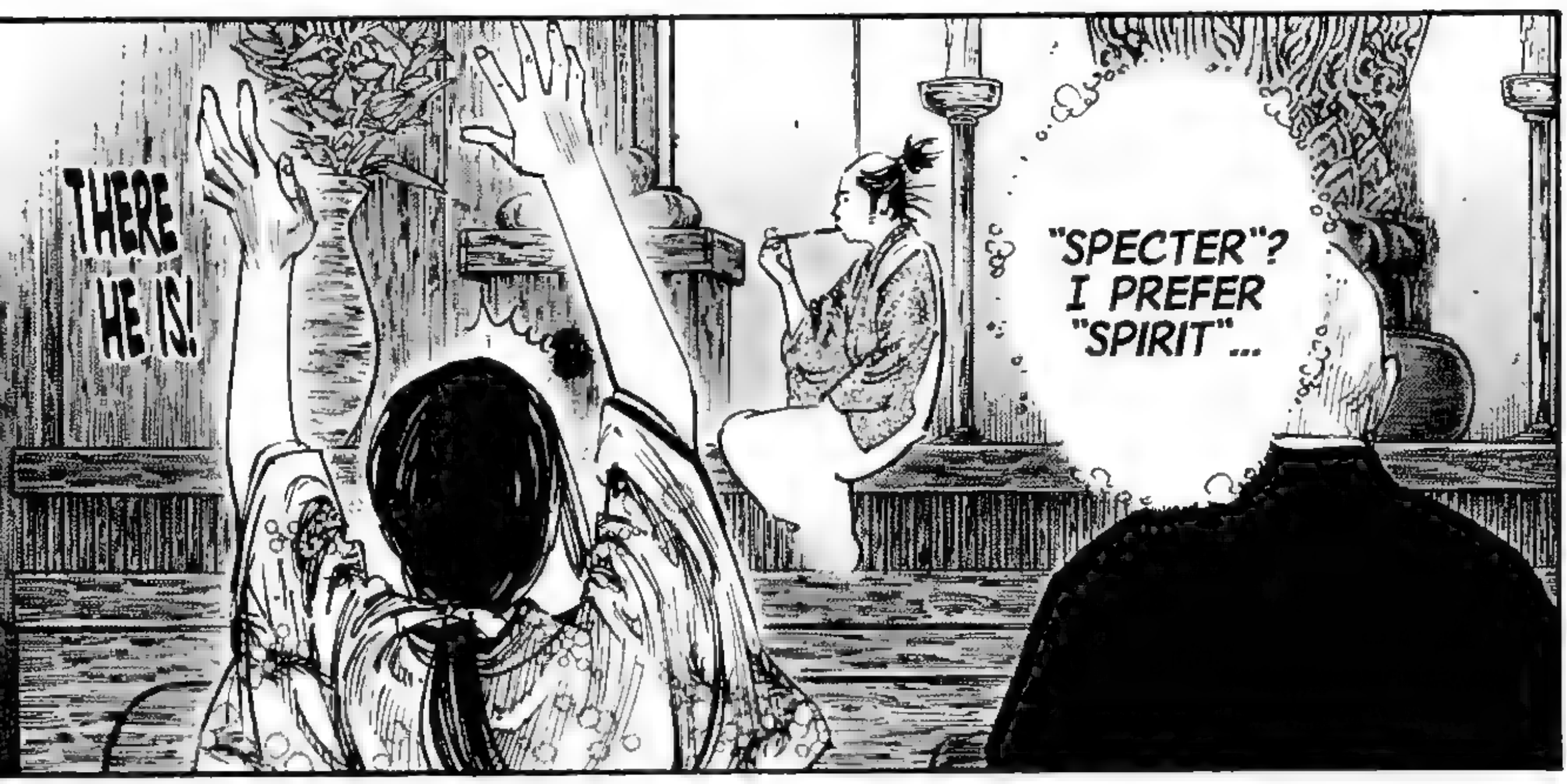
REST IN PEACE. REST IN PEACE.

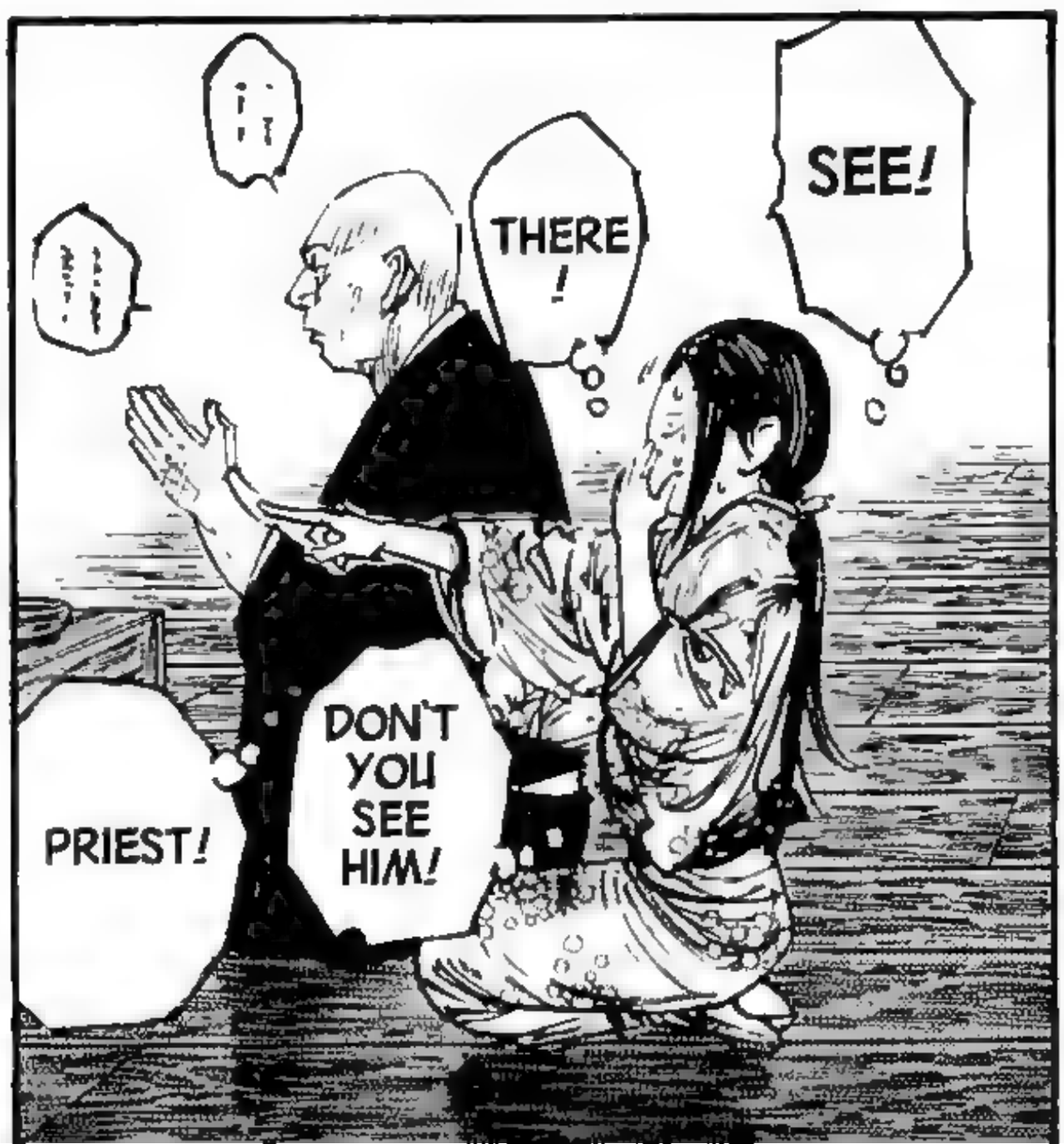
OH, COME ON.

PLEASE LET THAT SPECTER REST IN PEACE.

LET HIM JOIN HIS ANCESTORS.

NAMU AMIDA-BUTSU NAMU AMIDA-BUTSU.





YOU'RE JUST WASTING YOUR TIME WITH ME.

BUT MAYBE TIME'S NOT AN ISSUE FOR YOU.

ANYWAY, JUST GO SEE HIM!

BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THAT MUCH TO HIM NOW.

SURE, WE'RE CHILDHOOD FRIENDS.

OTSU... WH-WHO ARE YOU TALKING TO?

...

YOUR FACE...

YOU'RE THE SAME GHOST... RIGHT?

YOUR EAR... IT'S BACK TO NORMAL...

.....

HM?

...MUSASHI WON'T LIVE MUCH LONGER.

YOU KNOW...

THERE WOULD BE NO FIGHT.

IT WOULD NO LONGER BE NECESSARY.

DON'T YOU THINK?

BUT I...

CHRP

.....

IT'S UP TO YOU TO TEACH THIS.

YOU MUST TELL EVERYONE ABOUT THIS STRENGTH YOU'VE FOUND.

...FOR OUR CHILDREN...

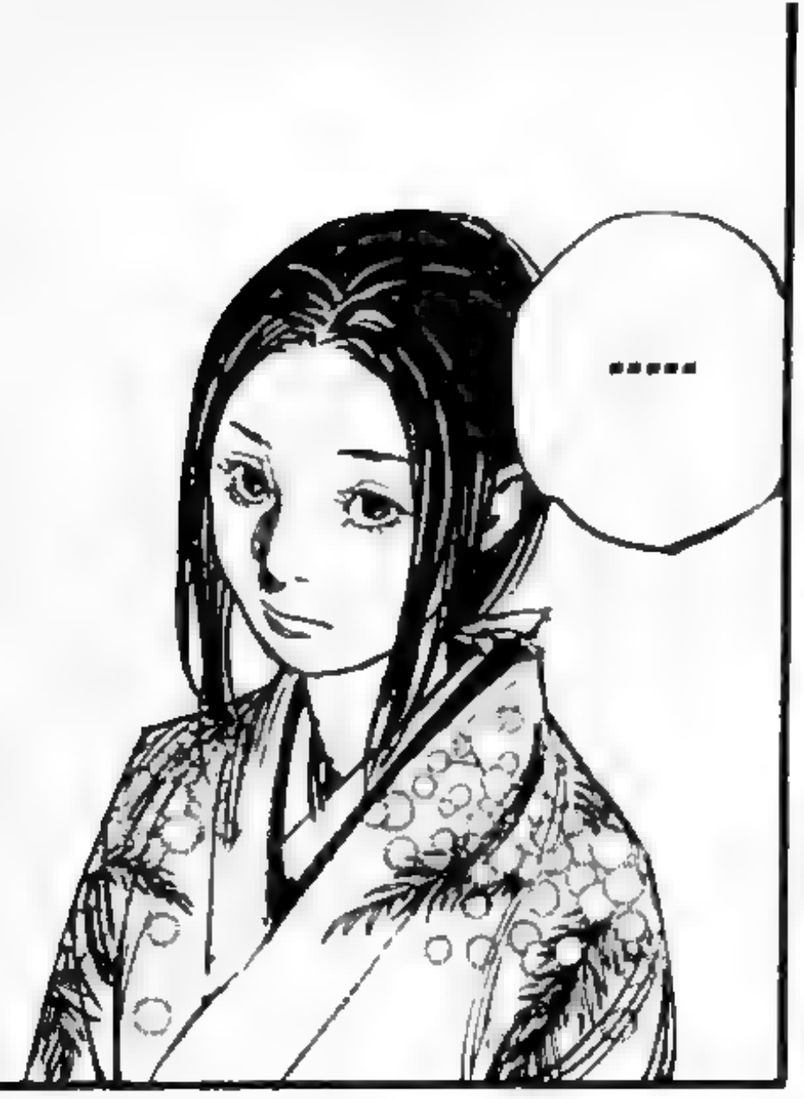
...AND THEIR CHILDREN ?

...ONE MUST FIGHT TO GET TO WHERE YOU ARE?

OR DO YOU THINK...

CAN YOUR STRENGTH ONLY BE OBTAINED THROUGH KILLING?

AND WHAT DOES THAT MEAN...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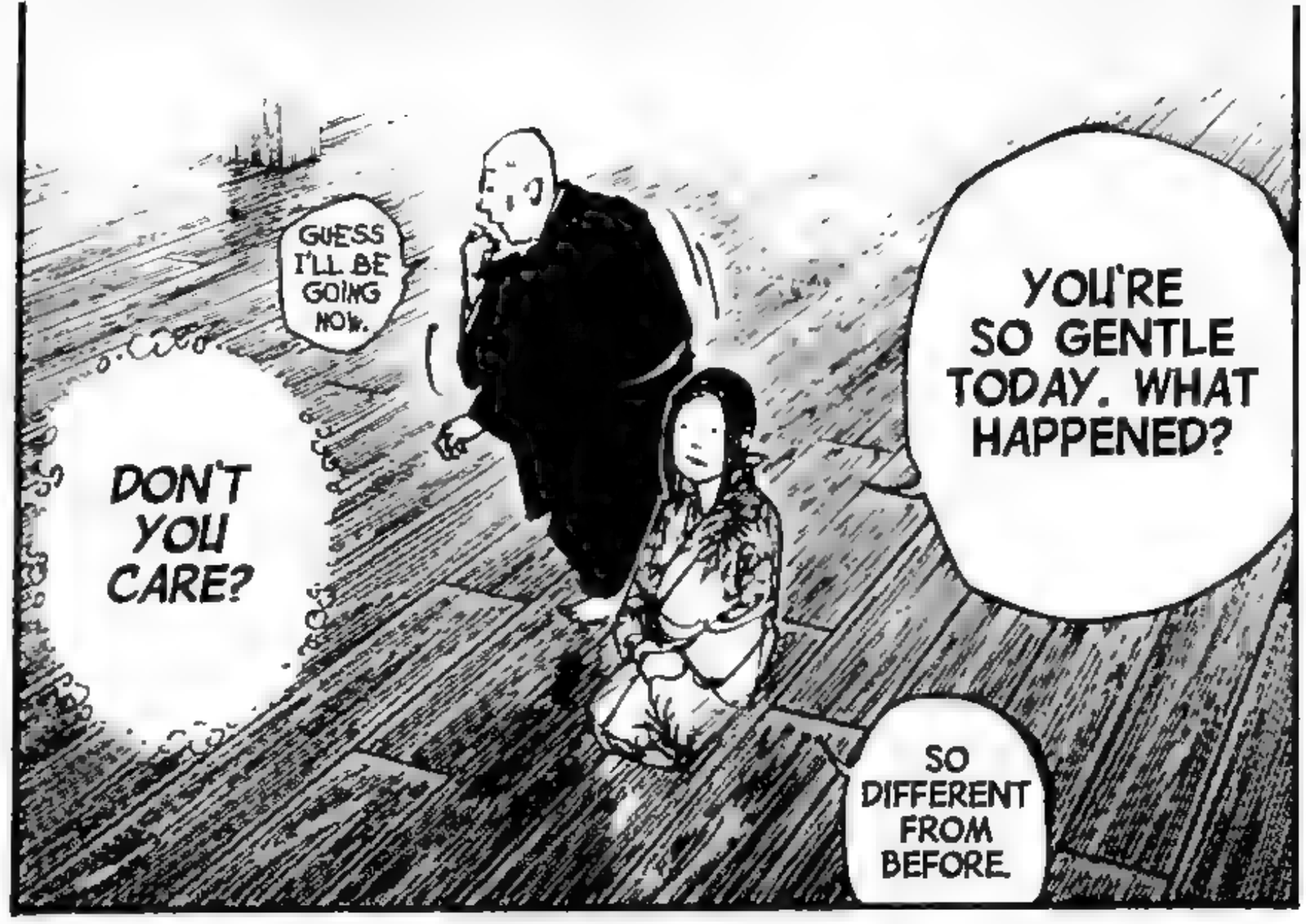
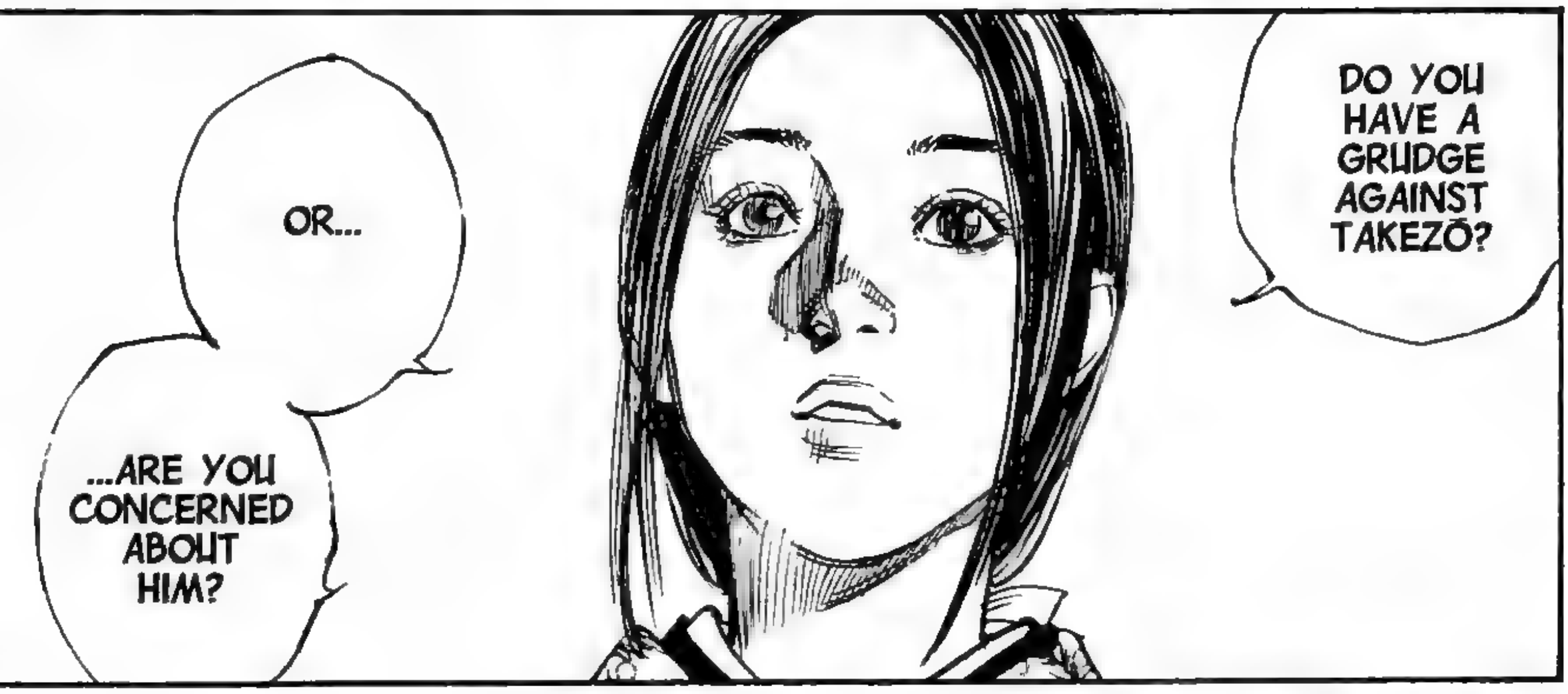
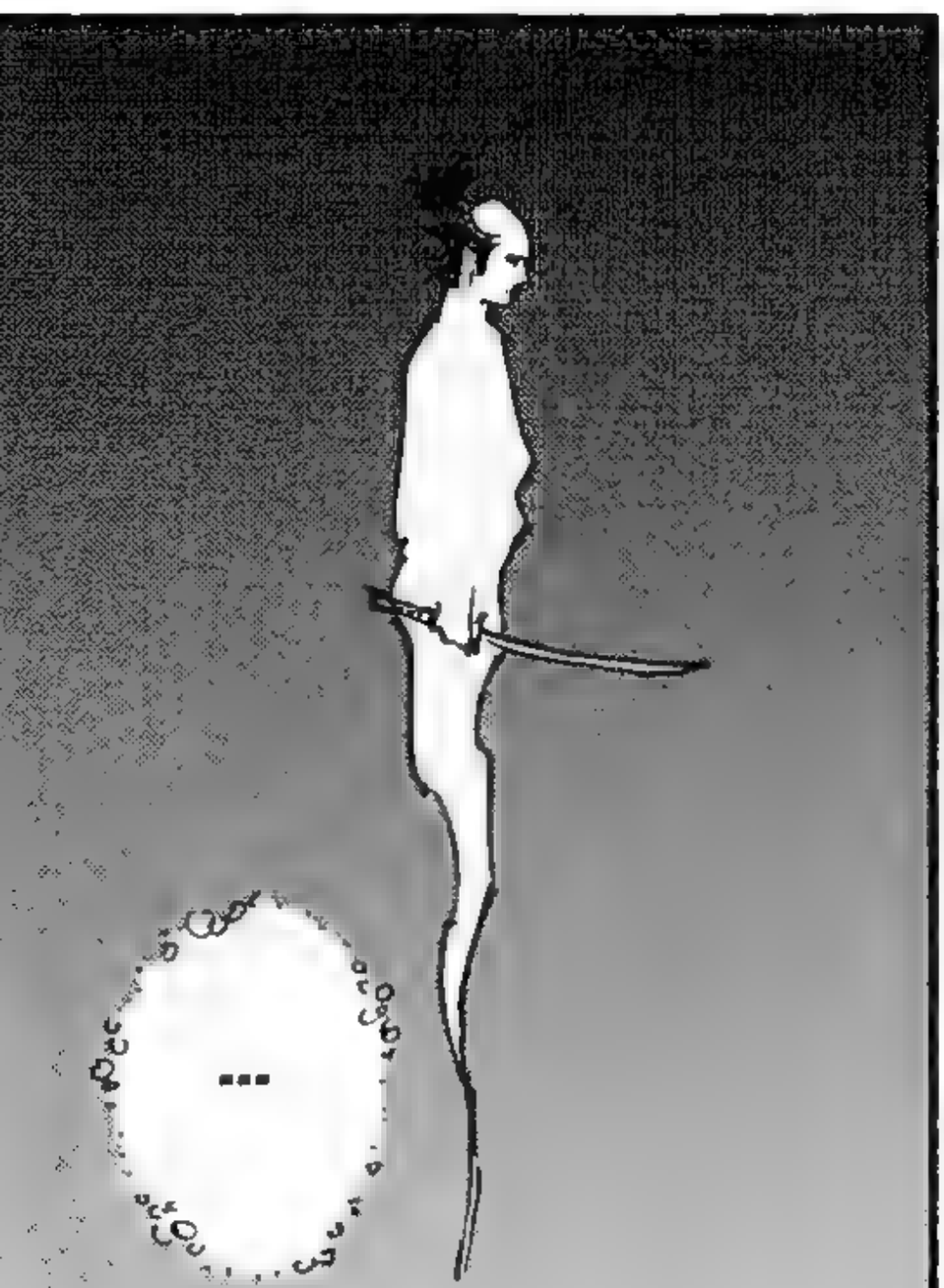

GUESS I'LL BE GOING NOW.
DON'T YOU CARE?
YOU'RE SO GENTLE TODAY. WHAT HAPPENED?
SO DIFFERENT FROM BEFORE.

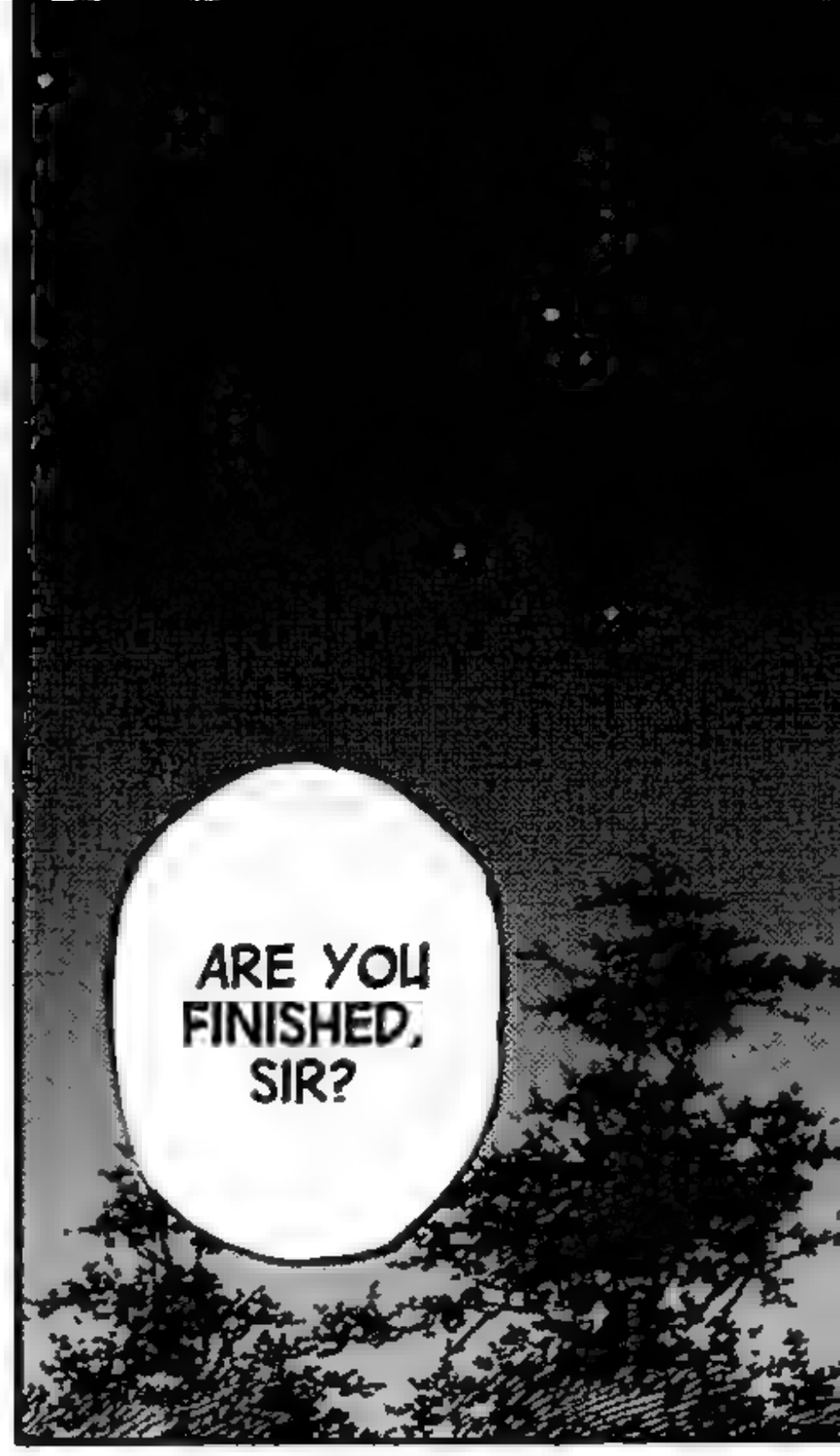

OR...
...ARE YOU CONCERNED ABOUT HIM?
DO YOU HAVE A GRUDGE AGAINST TAKEZŌ?


...

YOU HAVE A GRUDGE...
...BUT IT SEEMS LIKE YOU DON'T WANT HIM TO DIE.

...
SAY...

YES, I AM. THANKS.


ARE YOU FINISHED, SIR?

YES...
A ONE-ARMED SWORDS-MAN.
ŌTAGURO FROM THE YOSHIOKA WAS IT?
WHO WAS THAT MAN YOU MENTIONED TO THE SHOSHIDAI?

!
...SCREAMING THAT HE WOULD CUT YOU DOWN.

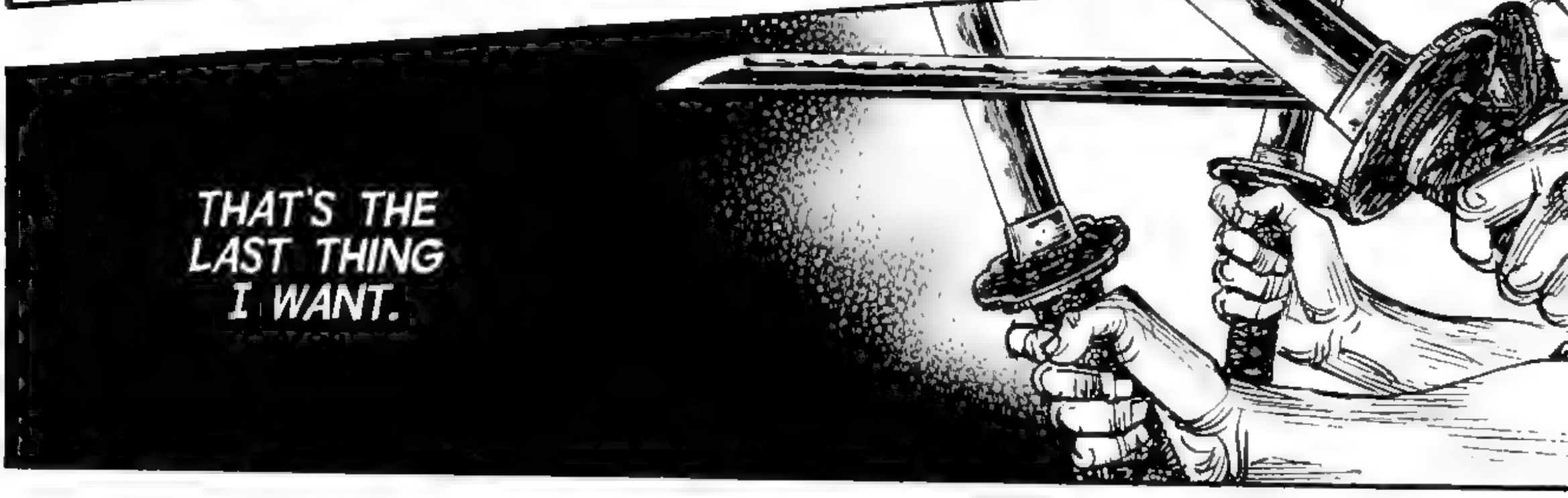
IT SEEMS HE HAD ONLY RECENTLY LOST HIS ARM, SO HE WAS QUITE UNSTEADY WITH HIS SWORD.
WE MANAGED TO SUPPRESS HIM WITHOUT ANYONE GETTING INJURED.
I'M AMAZED HE HAD THE GALL TO COME HERE IN HIS CONDITION...
?

DON'T YOU THINK IT'S TIME YOU CHOSE ANOTHER PATH, MUSASHI?

SAY, WITH OTSŪ?

TOGETHER WITH OTSŪ?

IMPOSSIBLE.



FSH

YES...

I HAVE A PLACE TO RETURN TO.

AND IT'S ALWAYS BEEN HERE.

THAT FEELING I HAD JUST AT THAT TIME.

THAT PLACE...

WON'T YOU COME TO OUR DOJO TONIGHT?

WE CORDIALLY INVITE YOU...

MUSASHI ...

I HAVE A PLACE TO RETURN TO.

AND IT'S ALWAYS BEEN THERE.

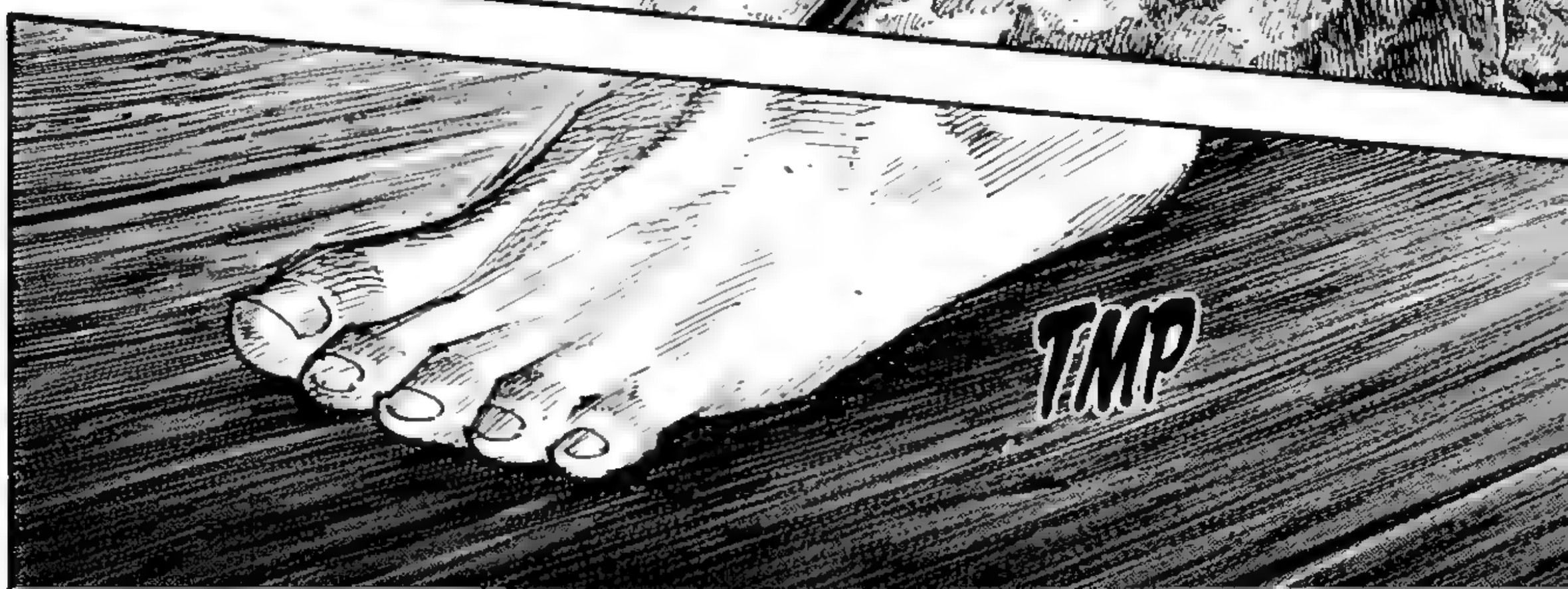
THAT PLACE.

THAT FEELING I HAD.

BODY AND SOUL CENTERED...
NEITHER LOOSE NOR TENSE.
MY BODY A MERE SPECK AMONGST THE INFINITE THINGS AROUND ME.
THAT'S WHERE I WANT TO GO BACK TO.

WHAT'S THIS FEELING ...?
BUT SOMEHOW STILL CONNECTED TO IT ALL.

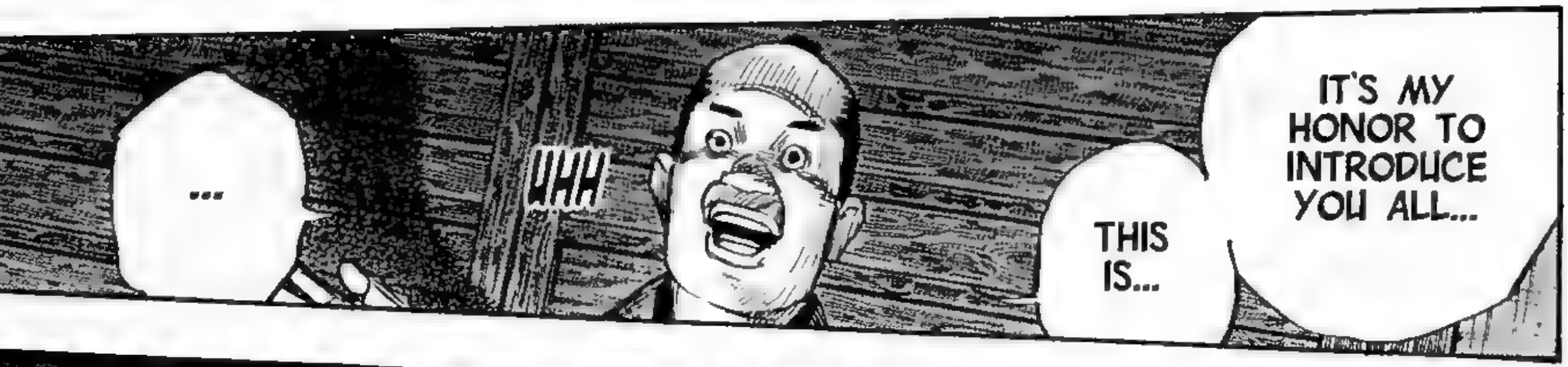
HEH
IS THIS HAPPINESS?


TMP

...!!

HE'S YOUNG.
SO YOUNG.

IT'S HIM!
GULP


...
UHH
THIS IS...
IT'S MY HONOR TO INTRODUCE YOU ALL...

BY THE WAY, WHAT IS YOUR SWORD STYLE?

# #269 | The Light

YAHH!
WHUD
THUD
FWAP

UMF!
HAH!
FWAP
YAHH!
WHUD

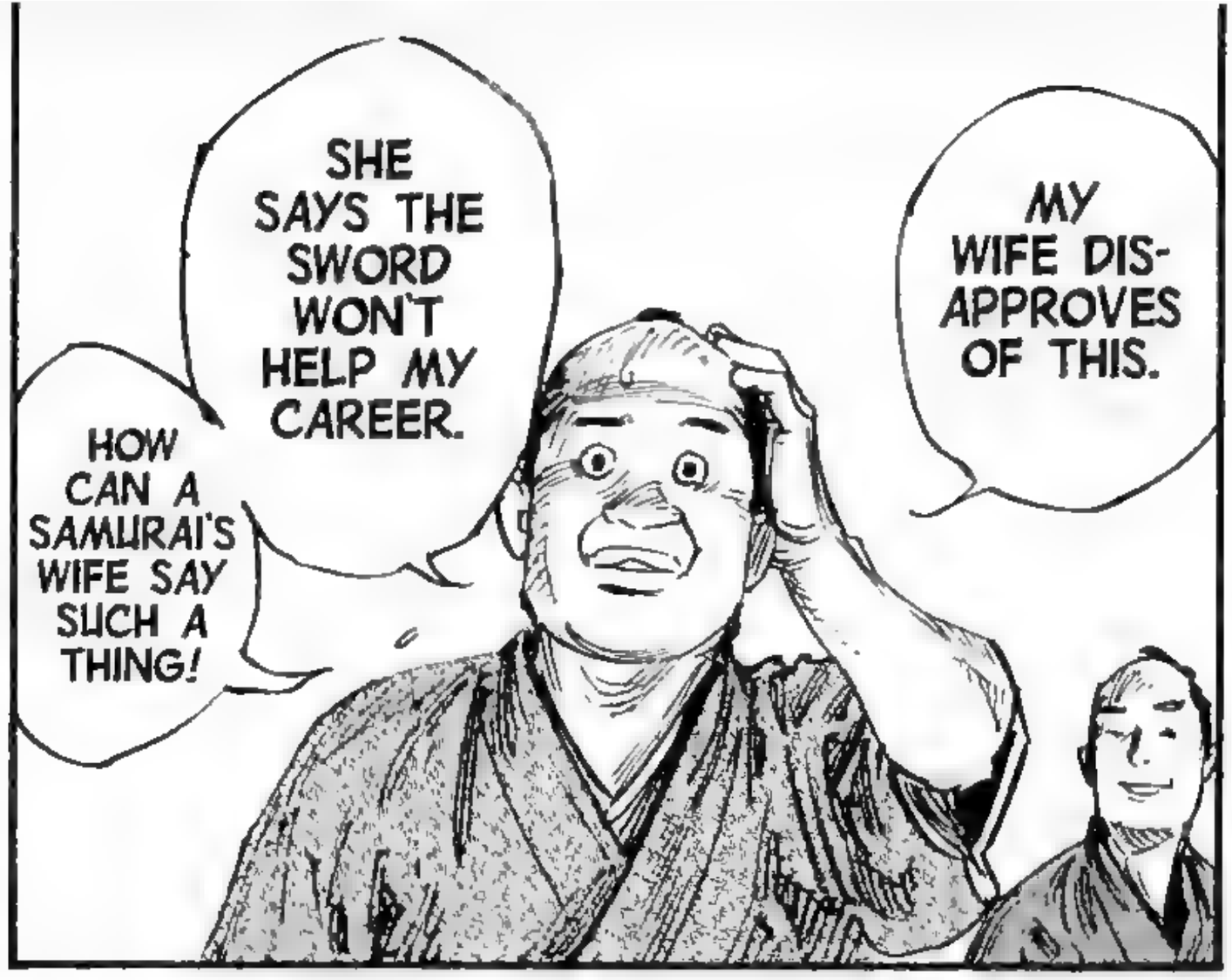
THE YAGYU USED THESE TOO.
FWIP
...
FOR TRAINING PURPOSES, THESE ARE BETTER THAN WOODEN SWORDS OR REAL BLADES.
MAKES IT MORE PRACTICAL.

WE USE THESE SPECIAL TRAINING SWORDS.

YOU ARE VERY DEDI-CATED.
WE'RE NOT WORTHY OF RECEIVING THOSE WORDS FROM YOU, SIR.

THE SWORD IS WHAT BONDS US ALL TOGETHER.
WE MEET TWICE A WEEK TO STUDY.
RANK AND SENIORITY IS OF NO CONCERN TO US HERE...

MINE IS ALWAYS INSISTING I QUIT.
SAYS IT'S A WASTE OF TIME.


SHE SAYS THE SWORD WON'T HELP MY CAREER.
HOW CAN A SAMURAI'S WIFE SAY SUCH A THING!
MY WIFE DIS-APPROVES OF THIS.

A MONK STAYS OUT ALL NIGHT AND COMES BACK ALL BLACK AND BLUE?!
SHE HAS A POINT.
"WHAT'S A MONK DOING WITH A SWORD?" SHE SAYS!
MINE THINKS I'M CRAZY.

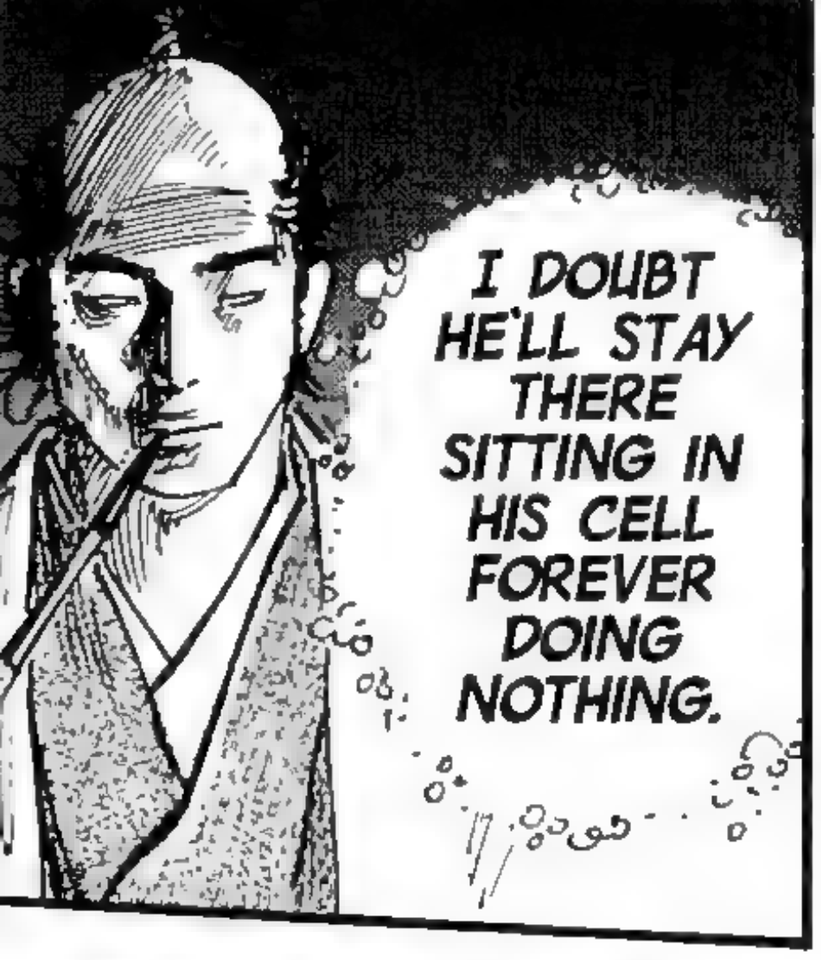
HA
HA
HA

SIR ITAKURA HOPES FOR YOUR CONTINUED SURVIVAL.
AND WE AGREE.
MY APOLOGIES FOR BEING BLUNT, BUT...

ARE YOU SURE THIS IS OKAY? I'M A PRISONER.

YOU ARE BEING DETAINED FOR DIFFERENT REASONS.

...HE MUST NOT DIE A MEANINGLESS DEATH.


I DOUBT HE'LL STAY THERE SITTING IN HIS CELL FOREVER DOING NOTHING.

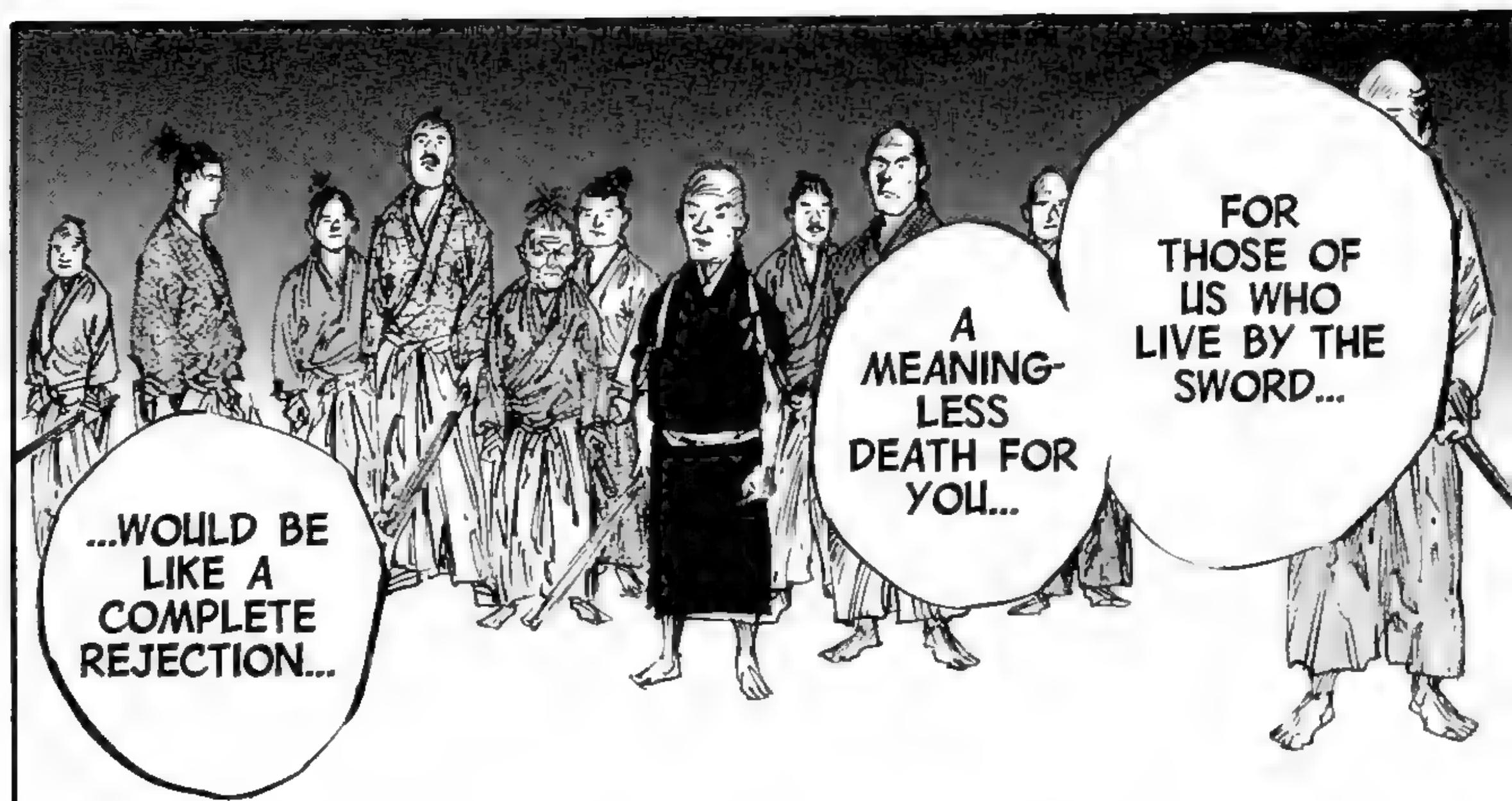
WELL...
BUT HE CUT YOU ALL DOWN. HOW COULD THAT BE?

THE MOMENT HE COMES OUT OF THERE...

WORD IS THAT HE CAN BARELY WALK NOW.
WE HAVE TO THANK THE YOSHIOKA FOR THAT.
LET ME HAVE THE FINISHING BLOW.

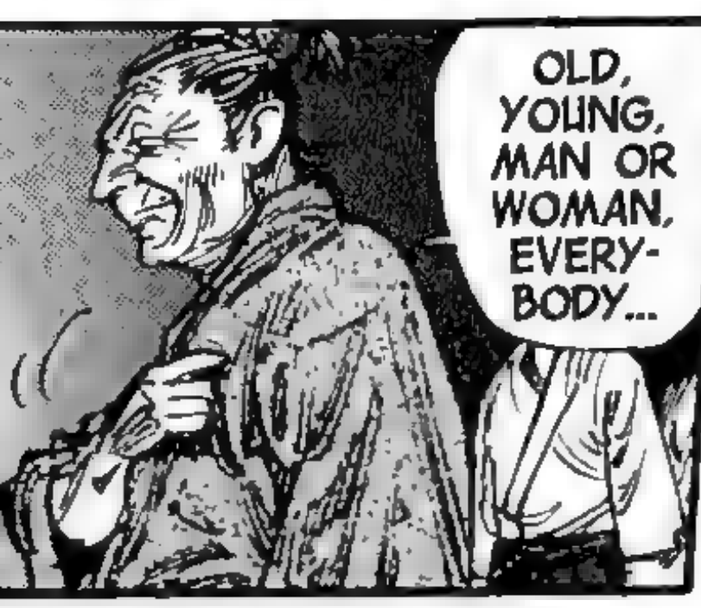
...WEAK MEN DRIVEN BY GREED AND AMBITION...

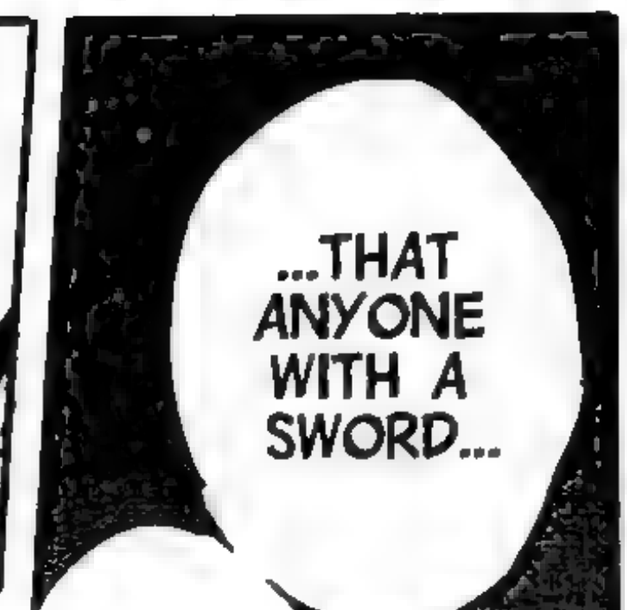
IF YOU SHOULD DIE A MEANINGLESS DEATH AT THE HANDS OF...

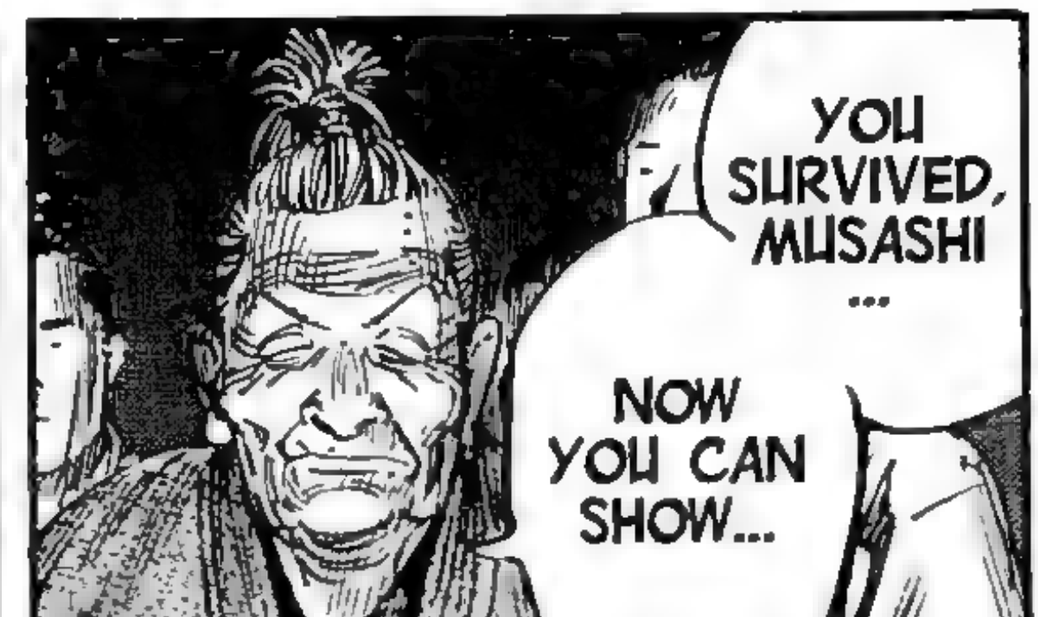


...OF THE VALUE OF THE SWORD.

TP

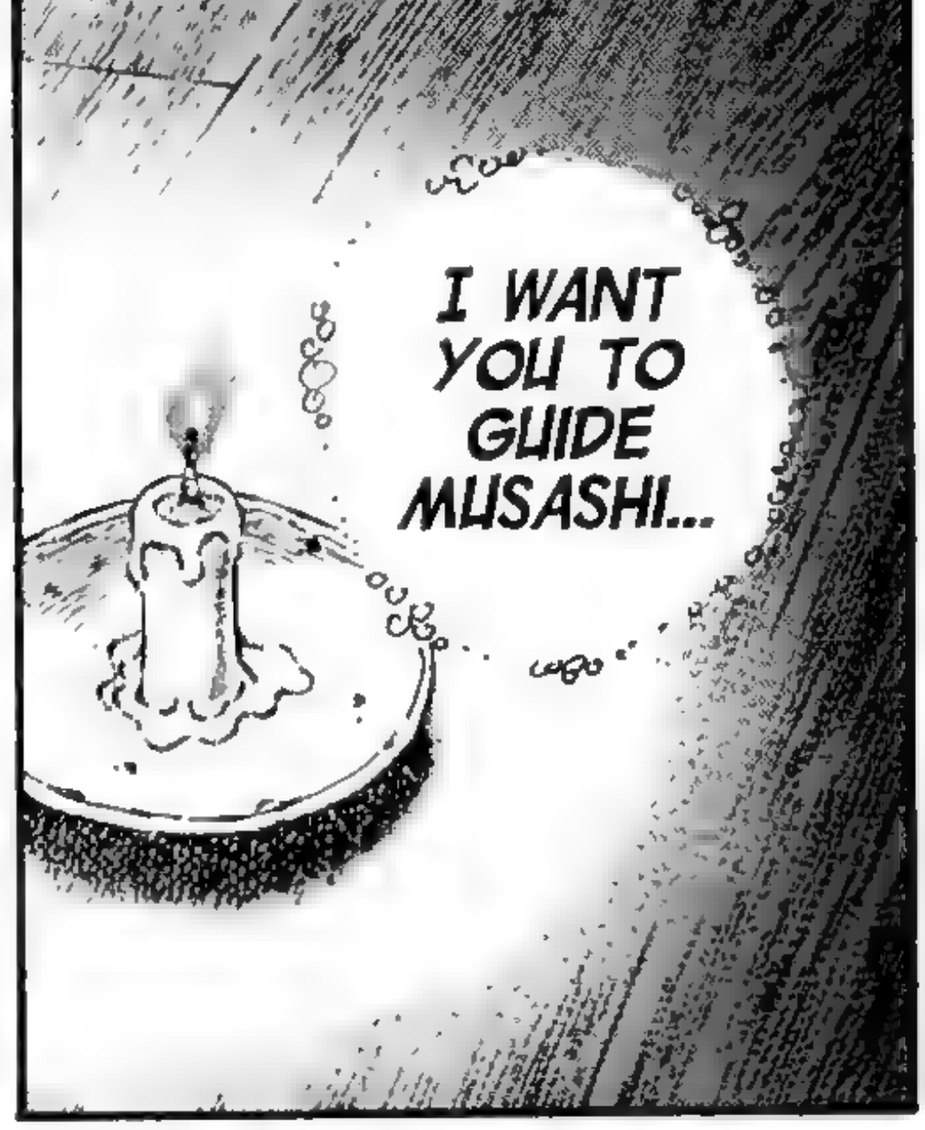


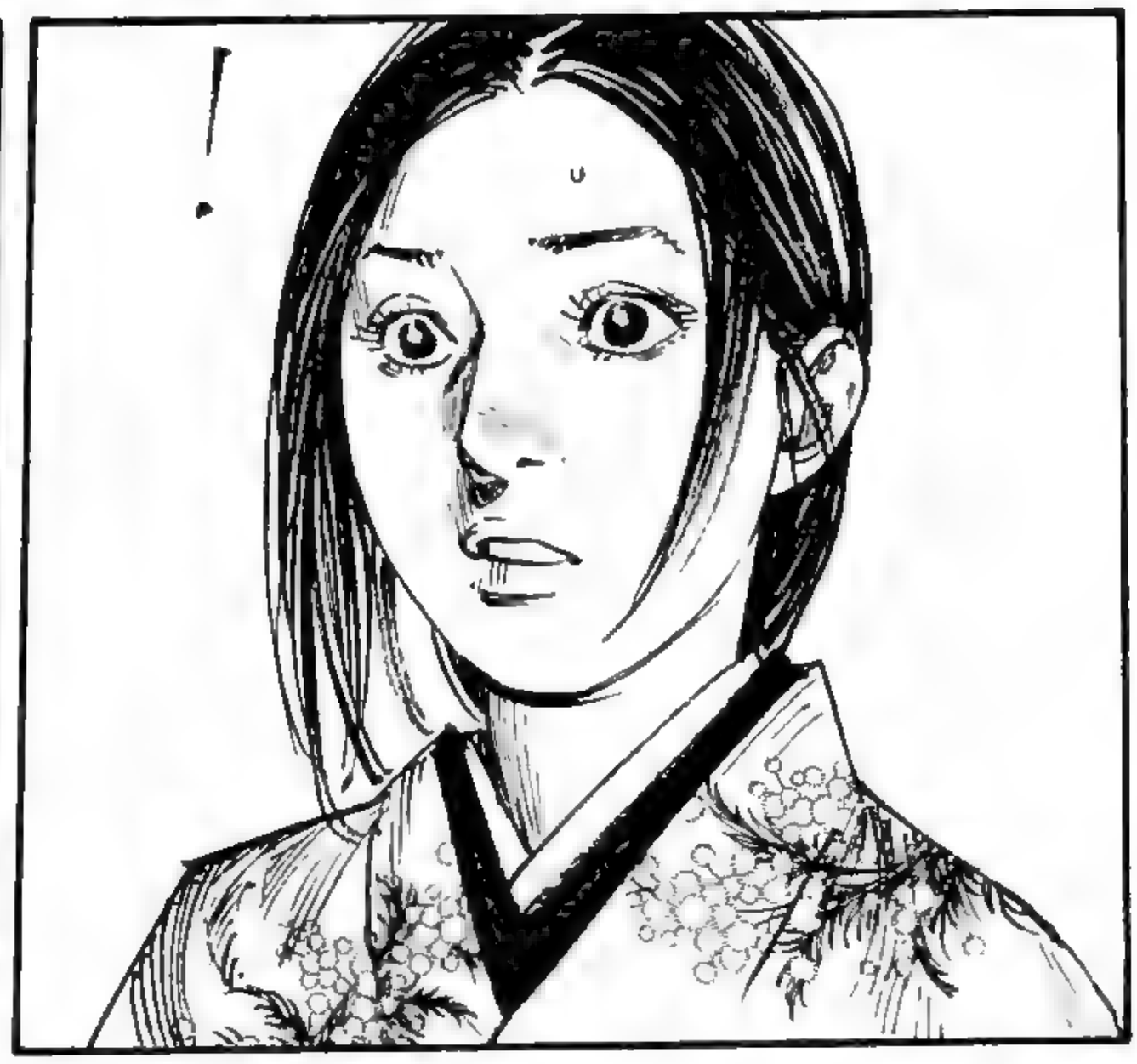



...YOU CAN SHOW US THE POTENTIAL THAT IS OUT THERE.
FLKR
OTSU...

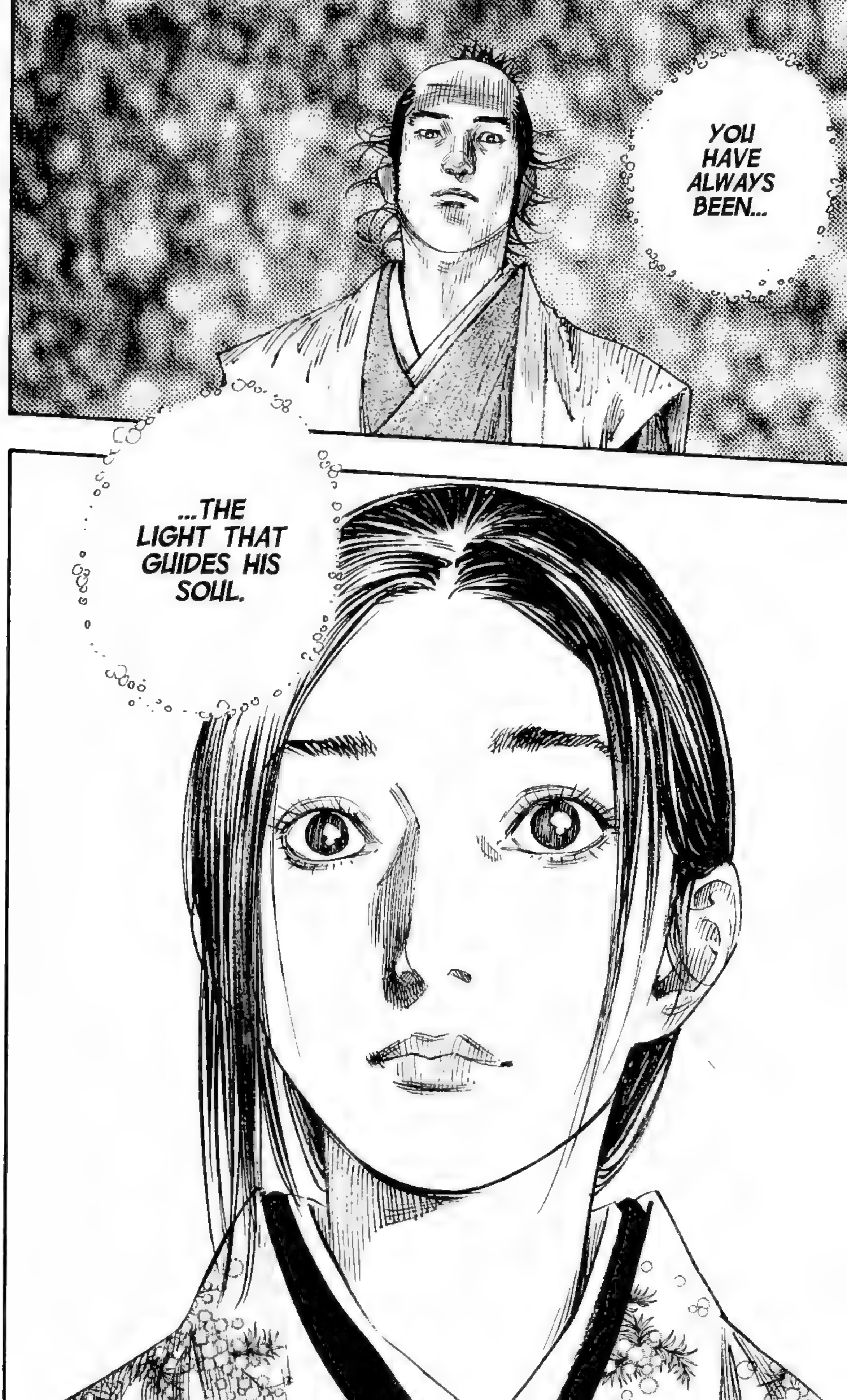
GUIDE HIM TO THE LIGHT.
WHAT CAN I DO?
WHAT?! WHY ME?


I WANT YOU TO GUIDE MUSASHI...



WHY DON'T YOU GO TELL HIM YOURSELF?
IT HAS TO BE YOU.
WHY?!

MUSASHI'S DONE ENOUGH FIGHTING.
MORE THAN ENOUGH.


YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN...
...THE LIGHT THAT GUIDES HIS SOUL.

THE SWORD HAS BEEN HIS CENTER. THE PLACE HE ALWAYS RETURNS TO.

HOWEVER...

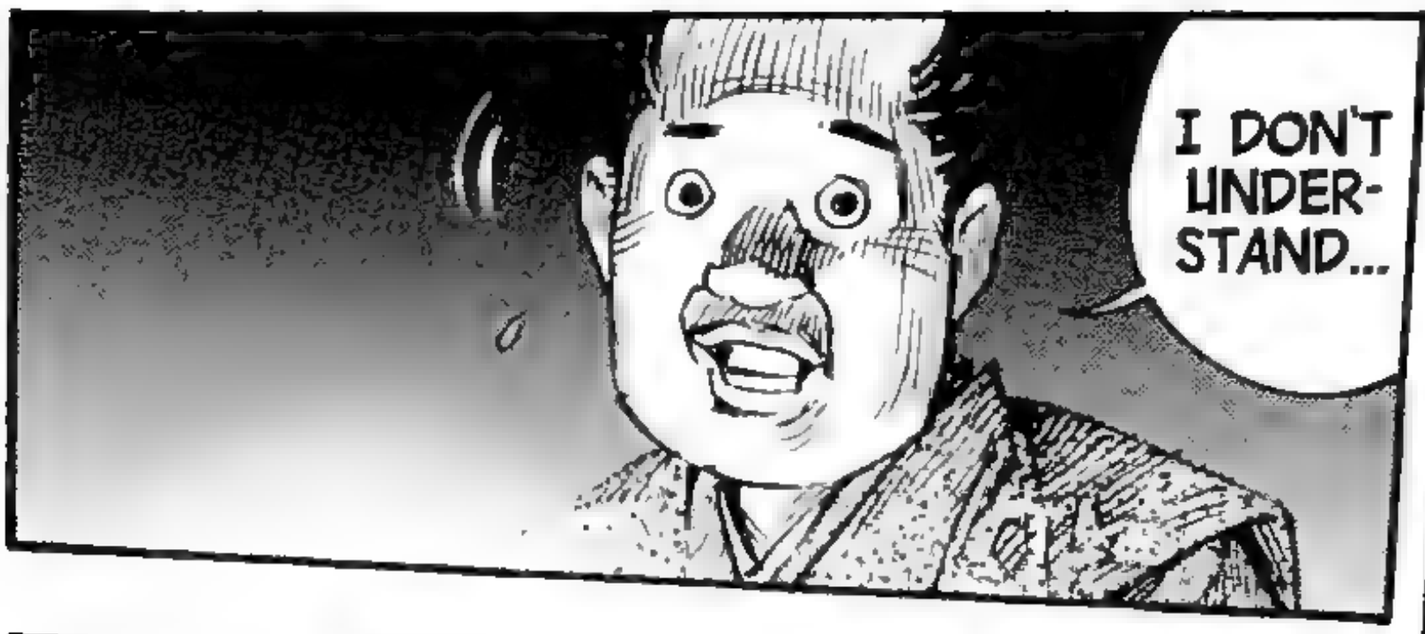
YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN HIS GUIDING LIGHT.

SIR?

FICH
YOU'RE KIND MEN.

FICH
FICH

AND STRONG.


I DON'T UNDER-STAND...

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HOSPITALITY.

UR...

WHUD

HUH ?!

TUNK

FICH

SHUF

SHUF

SHUF

SHUF

FICH

I HAD OPPONENTS...

SHUF

I HAVE TO MOVE FORWARD BEFORE I FORGET THAT FEELING.

SHUF

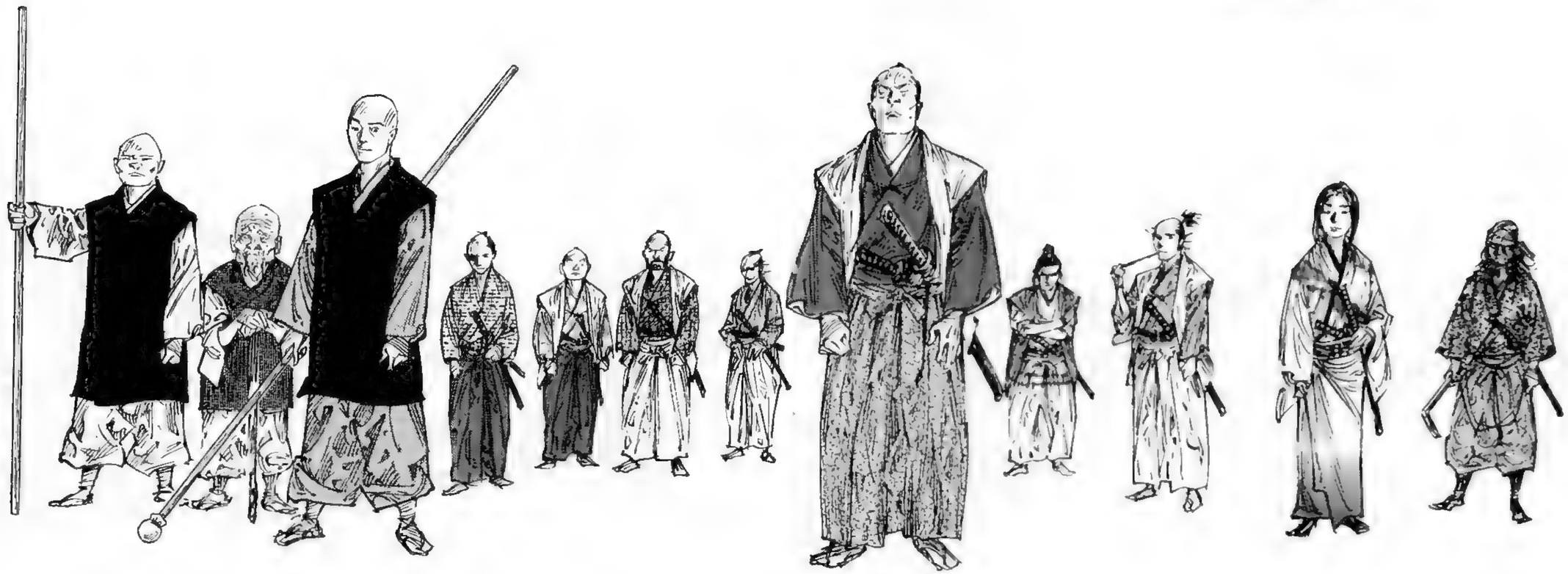
I CAME SO CLOSE, BUT NOW MY LEG IS... DAMN IT!

IT WAS ALMOST WITHIN REACH.

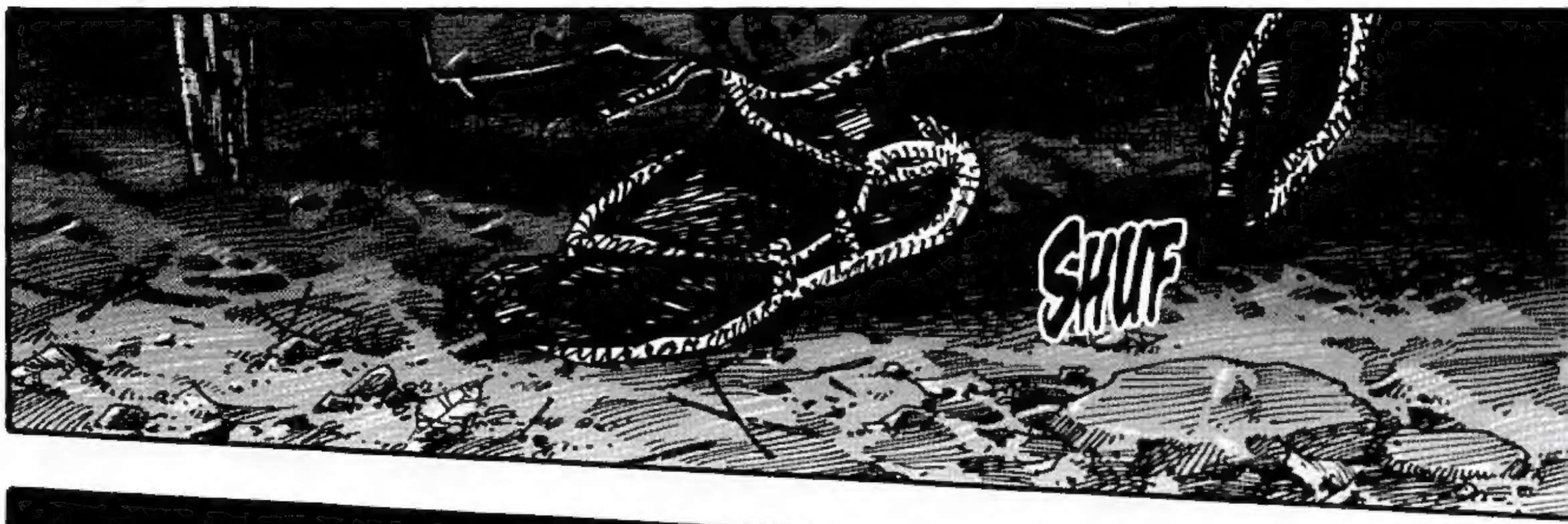
ALMOST HAD IT...

THAT'S HOW I WAS ABLE TO COME SO FAR.

OPPONENTS WHO WERE WILLING TO GIVE EVERYTHING THEY HAD WITHIN THEMSELVES.



I WAS NOT ALONE.



THERE'S NOTHING ELSE I CAN HOPE FOR.

SHUFF

ANOTHER BATTLE OF LIFE AND DEATH...

PLEASE GOD...

LET ME FIND ANOTHER OPPONENT OUT THERE THAT REQUIRES ME TO GIVE EVERYTHING I HAVE.

PLEASE GIVE ME ONE MORE CHANCE.
SHUF
SHUF

Vagabond

End of volume 30